THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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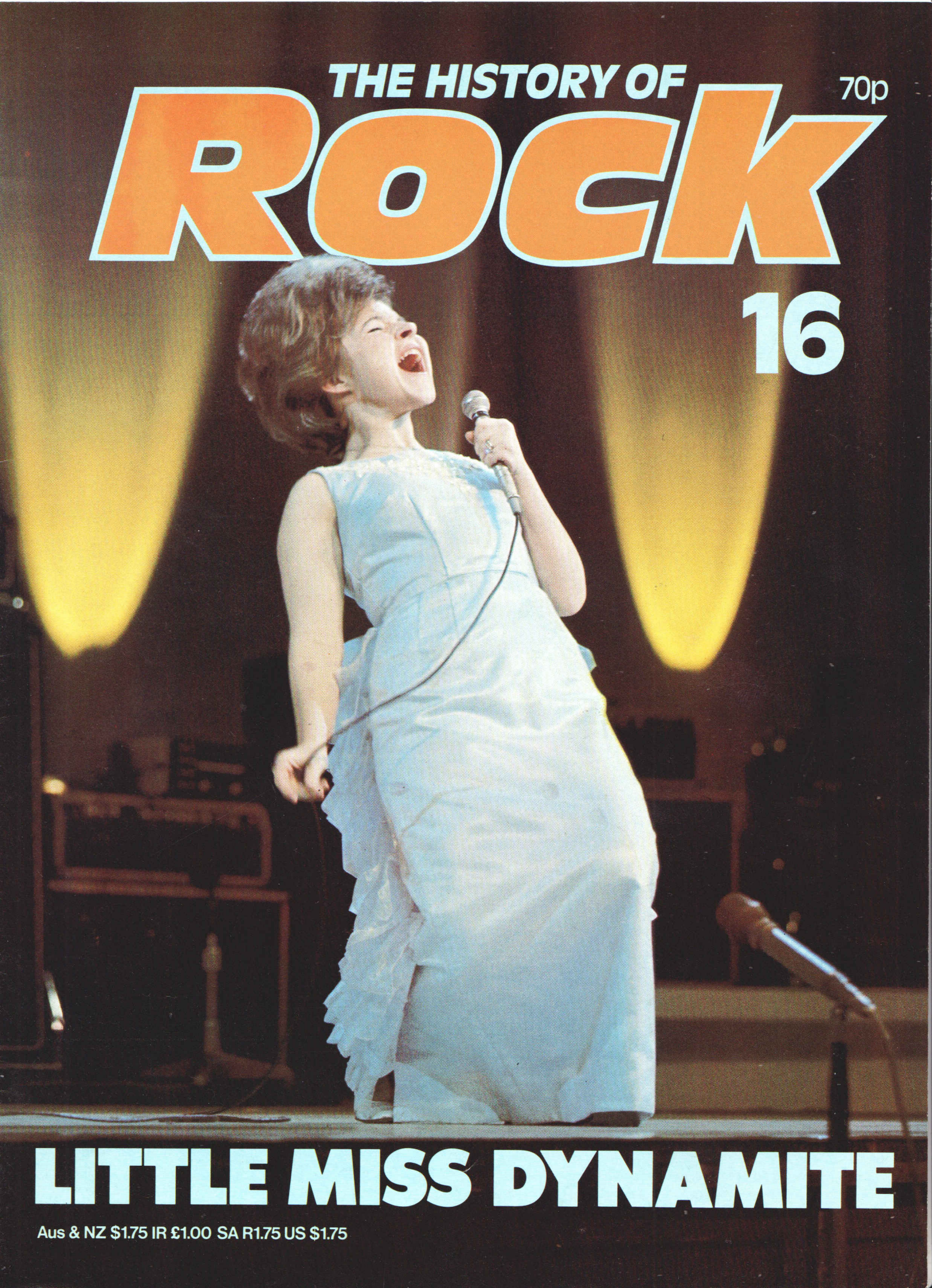

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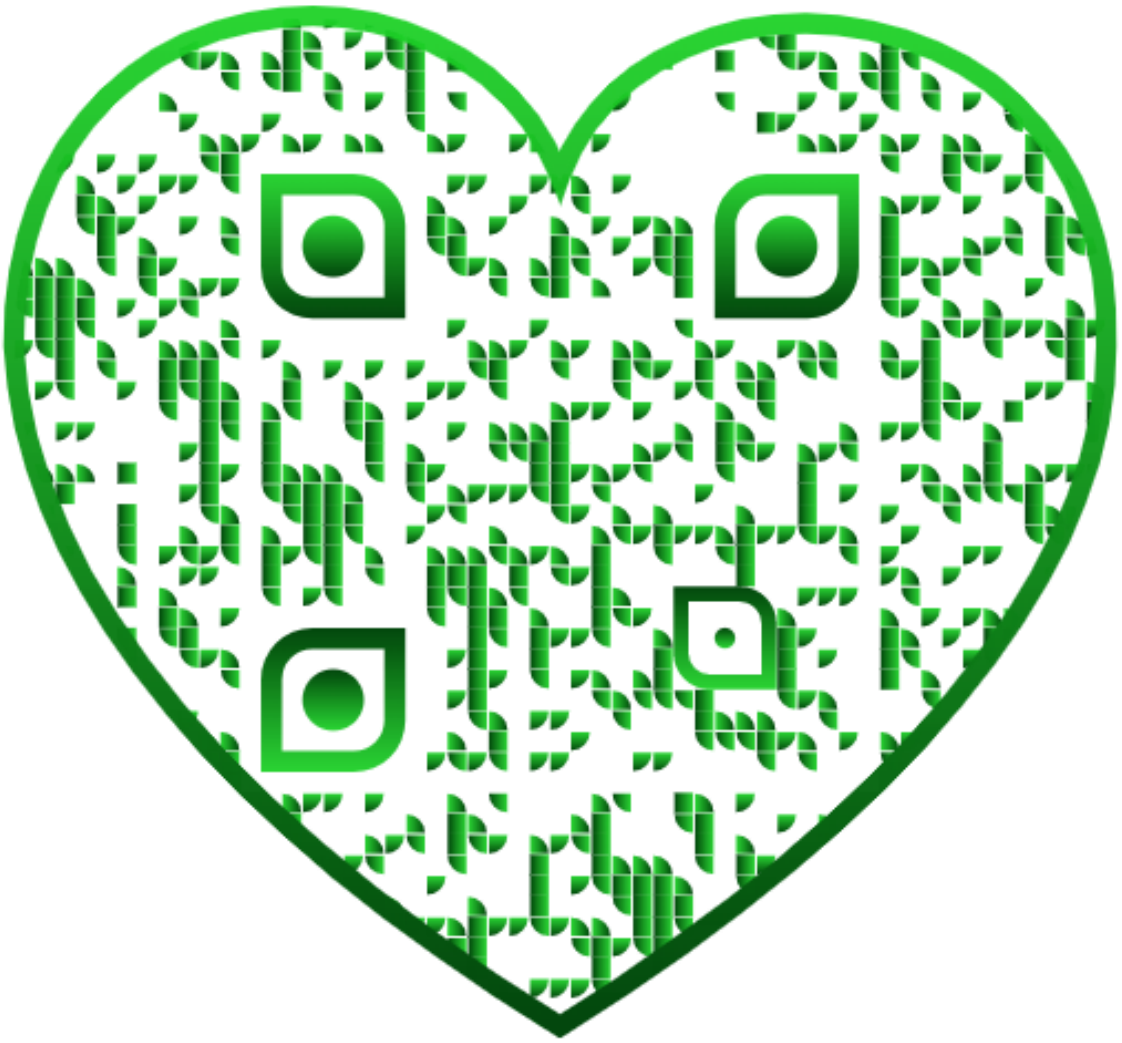

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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The frustrations of postwar black America frequently found expression in some of the Fifties' most innovative music. And the stars who provided this music – Ray Charles, Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke, to name but three – were themselves adopted as folk heroes, achieving a degree of influence and notoriety which would be reflected in the flowering of Sixties soul. Cooke and Charles were also gifted and prolific songwriters, who made their mark in the charts.

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Girls and Boys

Rock's solo stars seemed to get younger and cuter all the time

Pat Boone and Shirley Jones in a scene from April Love, *the 1957 film in which Boone made his screen debut. By then he was the biggest-selling rock star next to Elvis, but of a very different stripe. Boone was conservative in both style and appearance, every bit the image of the clean-cut conventional boy next door.*

IT IS COMMON to see the late Fifties/early Sixties as a period when rock slowed down; when its best artists were out of the public eye or had abandoned their roots; when the deadening hand of big business pushed music into safe formulas. But there is another possible interpretation – or perhaps just a different aspect of all this: namely that it was a period of retrenchment, when after the violent breakthrough of the mid Fifties (and the reaction it had provoked), the music eased itself into national acceptance as *the* primary means of expression for the young, and settled into an unshakeable position. In the process rock itself may have been weakened, but it was laying the groundwork for future triumphs.

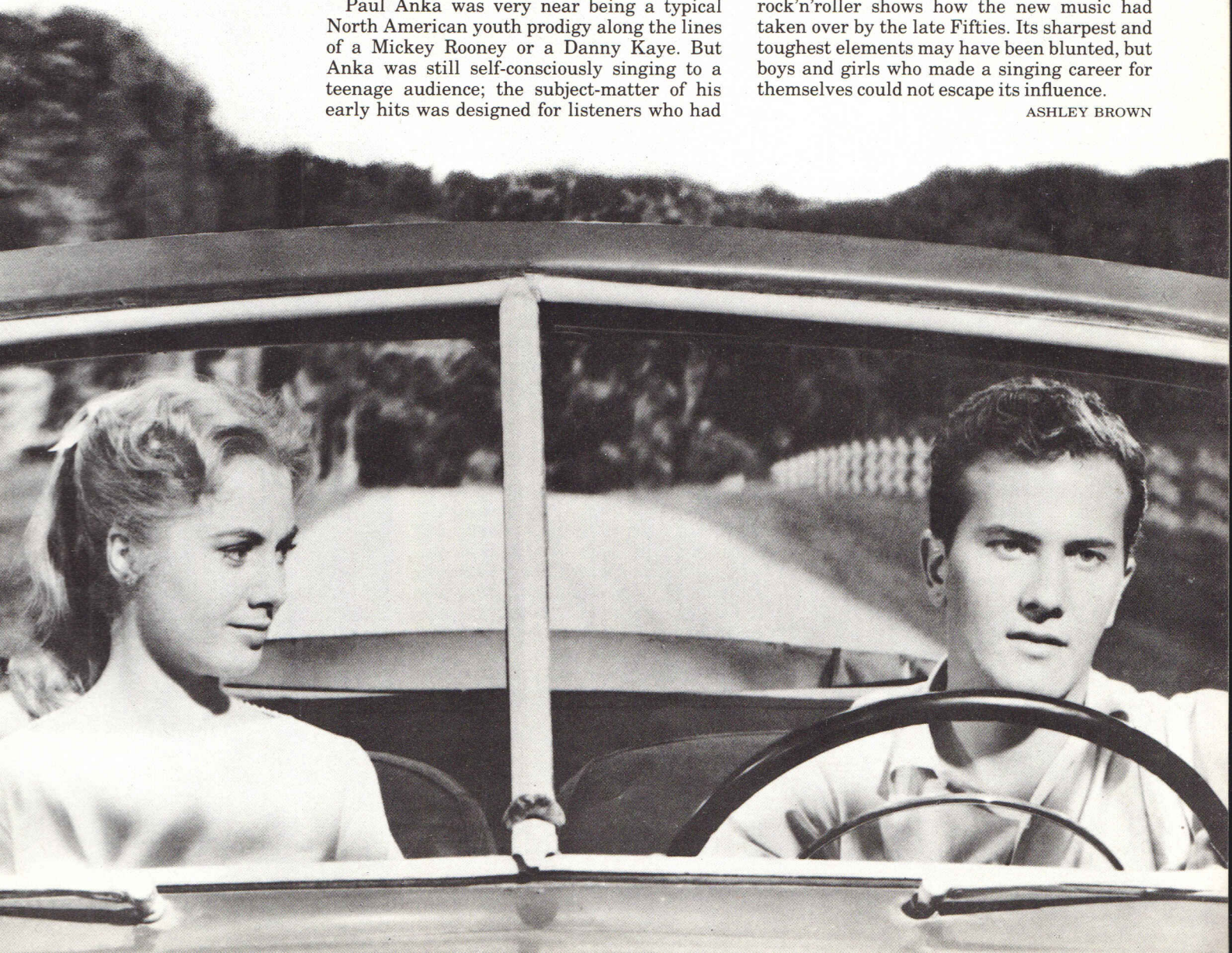
The singers who were brought together by rock range over a broad spectrum: Ricky Nelson, for example, was in many ways a typical example of the young Hollywood star, able to use his parents' TV show to further his talents. But because he took up singing when he did, he naturally moved into rock'n'roll.

Paul Anka was very near being a typical North American youth prodigy along the lines of a Mickey Rooney or a Danny Kaye. But Anka was still self-consciously singing to a teenage audience; the subject-matter of his early hits was designed for listeners who had been made aware of their generation by exposure to rock music.

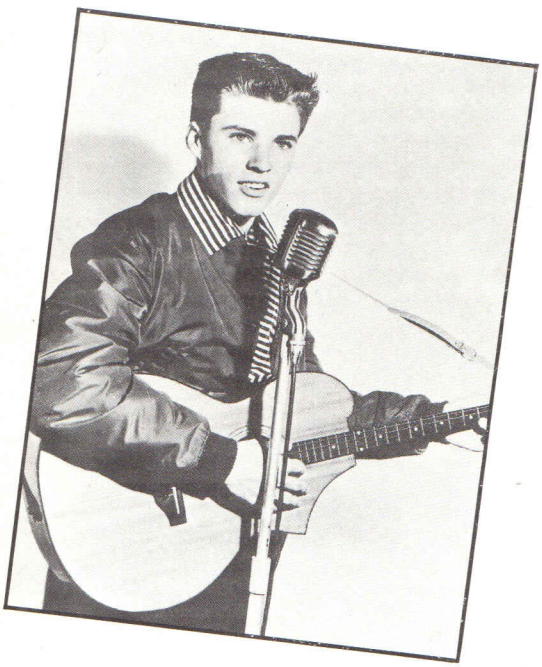
Pat Boone was different again. Once a cowboy balladeer, he moved into the charts covering original hits by rock greats Fats Domino and Little Richard. Boone's attitudes were far from the rebellious poses of many rockers; but his success showed the power of rock as a purely musical *style*, one which could be copied and used even though the emotional core was non-existent.

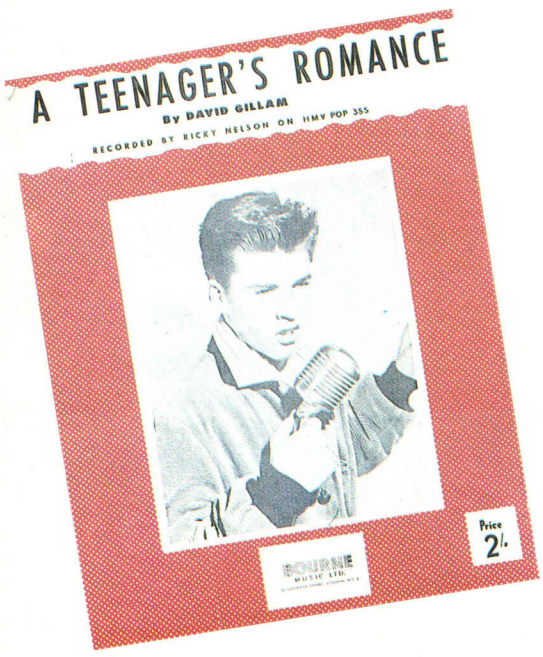
The two leading girl singers of the period, Connie Francis and Brenda Lee, are equally good examples of the unifying effect of rock. Connie Francis, from the Northeast and of Italian extraction, would no doubt have tried to carve out a career in the world of traditional show business – cabaret, supper-clubs and the like. Brenda Lee, a Southern girl from a poor background, might have enjoyed fame as a country singer in an earlier epoch; yet that she could be linked to Connie Francis – and to Pat Boone, Paul Anka and Ricky Nelson – as a rock'n'roller shows how the new music had taken over by the late Fifties. Its sharpest and toughest elements may have been blunted, but boys and girls who made a singing career for themselves could not escape its influence.

ASHLEY BROWN



Small-Screen Rocker





Ricky Nelson was a TV star before he made a record

'DAD, I WANT to make a record . . . ' Thus, according to legend, began the recording career of Ricky Nelson. In the wake of Elvis, the winter of 1956-57 saw many an American teenager wanting to make a record. However, such was the ideology of teenage rebellion that few would have considered going to their parents for assistance. Even fewer could have gone with any expectation that Mum or Dad could help make that dream a reality.

But then, Eric Hilliard Nelson was not exactly your standard American teenager. At age 16, he was a showbiz veteran who was probably as well known to America's youth as Presley. And although his father, Ozzie, didn't own a record company, he was the producer and star of the long-running television series, 'The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet' on which 'little Ricky' was a featured player as the youngest member of the Nelson family.

Ozzie Nelson was a diffident Thirties bandleader who turned his attention to radio in 1944. The outcome of this was a nationally-syndicated situation comedy show, 'The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet', the last-named being his actress/singer wife. In 1949, Ricky and his brother David joined the show's cast, playing themselves. The show transferred successfully to television in 1952 – it was to run until 1965 – and the whole family starred in a feature film, *Here Come The Nelsons*. Thus by 1956, when young Ricky Nelson asked his father to help him make a record, the request seemed natural. A brief career as a teen idol was, at the very least, clearly on the cards.

Ozzie Nelson made the necessary phone calls, a contract with Verve was signed and Ricky went into the studio to cut three sides. Problems at once occurred. Ricky wanted his cover of Fats Domino's 'I'm Walking' to be the main title, while his parents and Verve wanted the anodyne ballad, 'A Teenager's Romance', as the A-side. Their concern was to market Ricky on the basis of his role in 'Adventures', in which his cheeky lopsided grin and 'I don't mess around, boy' catchphrase suggested rebelliousness but went no further. Parental opinion won the day, but to everyone's surprise *both* sides made the Top Twenty, in 1957, selling a million copies. Ricky Nelson had gained acceptance as both rock'n'roller and teen idol.

Ricky Nelson's photogenic features appeared regularly on the cover of US teen magazines (top left), in studio publicity stills (above left) and on the sheet music of his recordings (left). 'A Teenager's Romance' was Nelson's first hit.

Ricky's rock'n'roll

The contrast in style and direction between the two sides of Nelson's first disc was to reverberate down the years of his career. The lush empty balladry of 'A Teenager's Romance' suggested a future as a vacuous teen idol, a cute image to sell records with. 'I'm Walking', with cheerful enthusiasm, wasn't the rockabilly rock'n'roll of Presley or Perkins – but then Rick Nelson was middle-class, not a poor white Southerner – yet it succeeded in creating that sense of pure unalloyed joy at being young and alive that characterised so much of the best of white rock 'n'roll.

Verve's lack of sympathy with Ricky's rock'n'roll desires was made clear when

they released another romantic epic, 'You're My One And Only Love' as the follow up. Lew Chudd of Imperial Records – the company for which Fats Domino had recorded the original 'I'm Walkin'' – moved quickly in mid-1957 and signed Nelson to a long-term contract that was to last seven years and bring the company 36 Hot Hundred titles (many of which were double-sided hits).

Along with the move to Imperial came a toughening-up of the Nelson sound. First Chudd helped assemble an all-important band with James Kirkland (later replaced by Joe Osborne) on bass, Butch White (later replaced by Ritchie Frost) on drums, Gene Garth on piano and James Burton on lead guitar. The band had previously backed Bob Luman and were all rockabilly players *par excellence*.

After Scotty Moore and Carl Perkins, James Burton was the most fluent guitarist in the Southern rockabilly style. His work with Nelson and other artists on the West Coast throughout the Fifties and Sixties (before he became the leader of Presley's touring band in the Seventies) virtually kept the rockabilly style alive.

Nelson's singing style was always clipped and clean, rather than raw and casual. Assisted by the lead guitar playing of Burton or, on the earliest sides, Joe Mathis, Nelson and the group created the synthesis of country, rockabilly and rock 'n'roll out of which West Coast country rock would eventually emerge.

Moreover, Nelson had the good sense to seek out new young songwriters, like the Burnette Brothers, who together and separately provided songs like 'Waiting In School' (1957), 'Believe What You Say' (1958) – which, a decade later, was to become the theme song of Nelson's revived career as a country rocker – 'It's Late' and 'Long Vacation' (both 1959) and 'My One Desire' (1960). He also recorded songs by Baker Knight, who wrote over 20 songs for Nelson, including 'Lonesome Town' (1958) and 'There'll Never Be Anyone Else But You' (1959), as well as songs by his producer, Jerry Fuller ('Travellin' Man' in 1961) and by Gene Pitney ('Hello Mary Lou', also in 1961).

Change of climate

With the obvious exception of the early Burnette rockers, the vibrancy of 'I'm Walking' rarely figured on Nelson's Imperial sides. In its place was the gentle, wistful sound, typified by 'There'll Never Be Anyone Else But You', which was wholly unique. A change of musical climate was around the corner, however. Whereas before 1960, Nelson had been a gentler Eddie Cochran figure singing honestly about teenage emotions, thereafter he was just one of many teenage idols competing for attention.

Nelson tried to broaden his career but, despite the marvellous impetus of a part in Howard Hawks' classic Western *Rio Bravo* in 1958, the move didn't quite work. His performance as Colorado, the young gunslinger, was more than worthy of the good press notices it received, particularly for his duet with Dean Martin on 'My Rifle Pony And Me' and his soloing of 'Cindy', but from then on his acting career went downhill. The song he commissioned for the film from Johnny Cash, 'Restless Kid', wasn't used, and then the next part he was offered was in *The Wackiest Ship In The Army*, a film whose title tells all.

Surprisingly for someone with a showbiz background, the Nelson career was spluttering to a halt. By all accounts, part of the reason was his declining interest in both the music scene and life as a teenage idol – in 1959, the Nelsons had to erect an electric fence around their home to keep away the fans – but the major reason

Opposite below: The Nelson family together on 'Ozzie and Harriet'. Opposite bottom: Ricky's parents on the air. Below: Nelson the blue-eyed teen idol.

seems to have been a genuine confusion as to what he wanted to become and a lack of managerial direction.

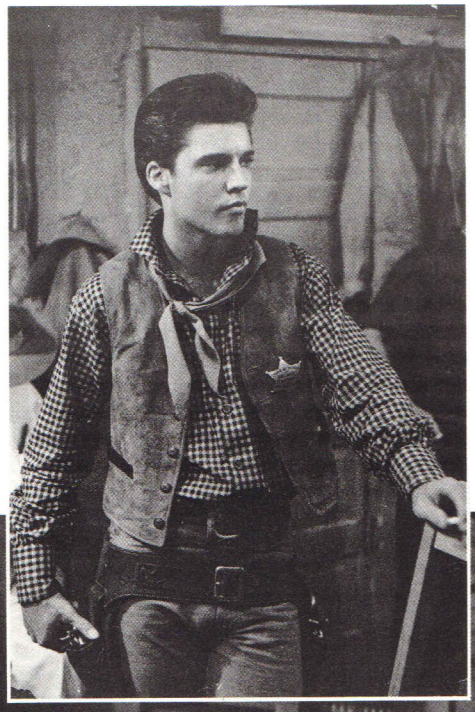
Nelson clearly wanted to develop – he dropped the 'y' from his christian name in 1961 – but he was rapidly becoming a has-been as rock'n'roll moved into its high-school phase where pizzicato strings, gimmicky arrangements and treacly emotions were endlessly provided by a series of fabricated and decidedly malleable teen idols. Nelson's quiet rockers were suddenly as unfashionable as the Sun sides of Elvis Presley.

New sense of direction

He remained with Imperial until 1963, when he switched to Decca (later MCA) where he struggled on for a couple of years, crooning 'adult' ballads like 'Fools Rush In' (1963) and 'The Very Thought Of You' (1964). But it wasn't until the end of the Sixties that Nelson rediscovered his direction and commercial success again. The night-club circuit had helped him survive the British invasion and psychedelia, and two albums he cut in 1967 showed the way forward. These were *Bright Lights And Country Music* and *Country Fever*, which were among the earliest country rock albums.

In 1969 Nelson finally took the plunge, quit cabaret and began playing rock clubs with a new backing group, the Stone Canyon Band. Among its early members were Randy Meisner (later of the Eagles), Steve Love (who later joined Roger McGuinn) and steel guitarist Tom Brumley, a refugee from country star Buck Owens' backing group, the Buckaroos. By now committed to the sound of country rock, Nelson refused to be limited by it, as the first hit of his revived career – a stripped-down version of Dylan's 'She Belongs To Me' (1969) – demonstrated. A further indication of his returning confidence came with his first albums of the new decade: a live album, *Rick Nelson In Concert*, and *Rick Sings Nelson* (1970) which provided another hit with 'Easy To Be Free', a key expression of the honest individualism that was to give him his biggest hit of the Seventies, 'Garden Party' (1972). *Rudy The Fifth*, released in the previous year, had been Nelson's 27th album and saw him continuing in a country direction. 'I always wanted to be Carl Perkins' was a later quote.

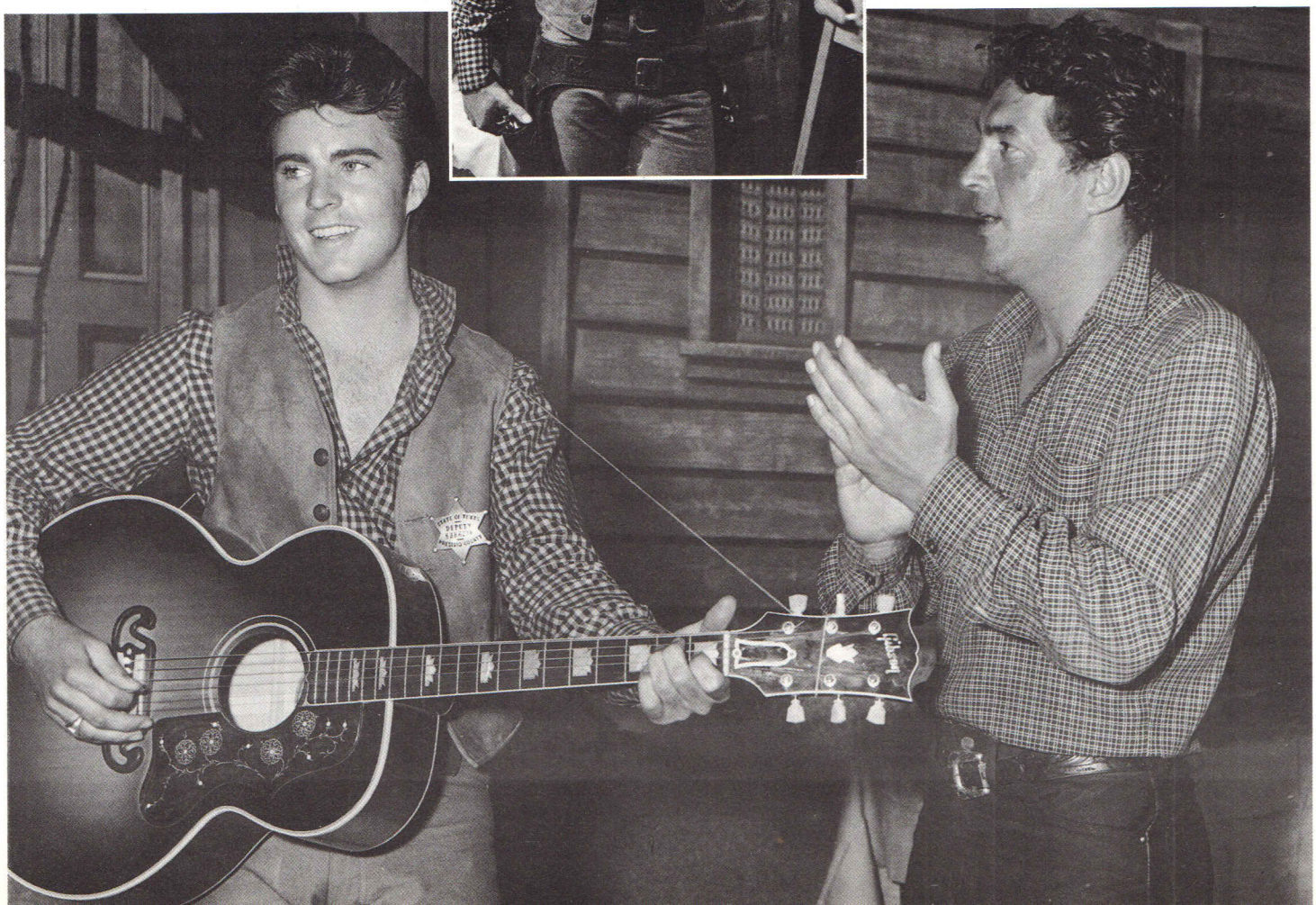
Two scenes from 'Rio Bravo', including the duet with Dean Martin (bottom).



'Garden Party' memories

As his career had taken an upturn, Nelson had carefully kept himself apart from the growing band of rock'n'roll revivalists who in the uncertain years of the early Seventies were trading on the memories and growing sense of nostalgia of their audience. Thus, Nelson's concerts and records contained only a smattering of oldies. But in 1971 he was invited to perform at a charity concert at Madison Square Garden and to his surprise was booed off the stage. In 'Garden Party' he reflected on the experience, summing up his philosophy in the refrain: 'If memories were all I sang, I'd rather drive a truck.'

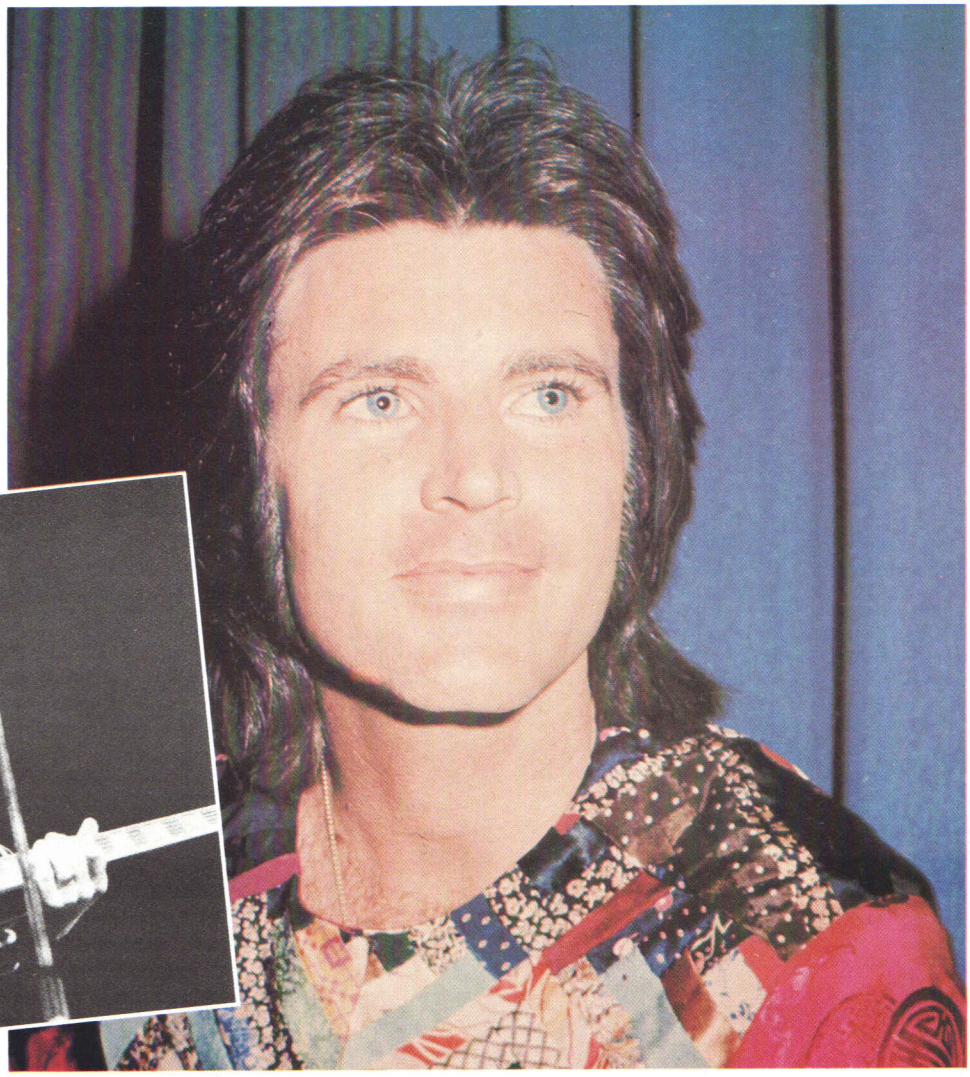
On the cover of the *Garden Party* album Nelson was pictured nervously clutching a guitar, half-smiling into the camera in his low-key suit. He certainly looked different from his Fifties image. But the song, sung over a walking bass line that bore an uncanny resemblance to that of 'Never Be Anyone Else But You', was performed with a directness and confidence that was startling. It seemed that, having evaded his past for so long, Nelson had finally come to terms with it and succeeded in carving out a new career for himself. But, sadly, the Stone Canyon band quit Nelson soon afterwards and the self-produced albums that followed, on the MCA and Epic labels, saw him retreating into whimsical pleasantries, even though they contained songs by the likes of Baker Knight. The music of this period was only too forgettable, and once more Nelson's career seemed to be drifting aimlessly. After Presley's death, he briefly hooked up with Colonel Tom Parker as manager, but

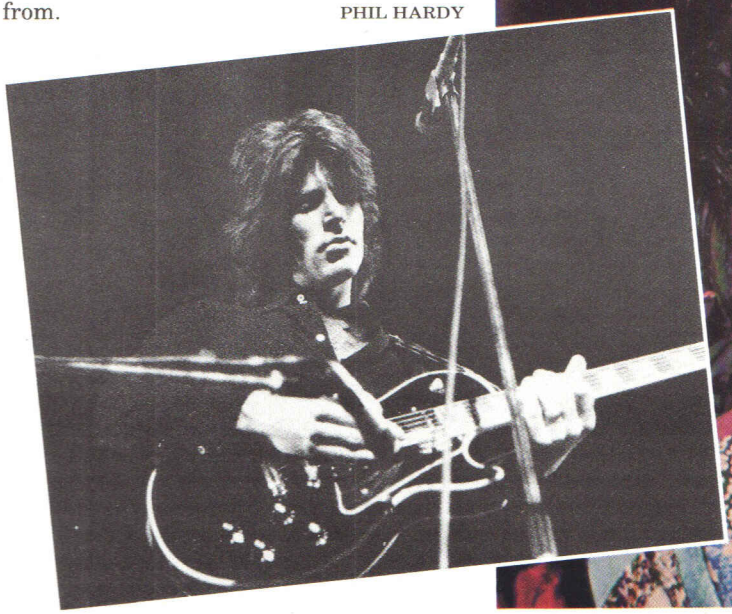


even the Colonel couldn't give his career its necessary sense of direction.

Despite Rick Nelson's consistent attempts to develop, his career reveals an innate sense of caution that he has only intermittently overcome. When, as on 'I'm Walking', 'Be Bop Baby', 'Never Be Anyone Else But You' and 'Garden Party', he overcame that caution the results were magical moments. In Ed Ward's phrase, Rick Nelson 'had the soul of a rocker'; the tragedy was that his background was continually pulling him the other way. For Nelson, unlike, say, Gram Parsons, country rock was a compromise music – a music to soothe, not shatter and illuminate the harsh world he was protected from.

PHIL HARDY





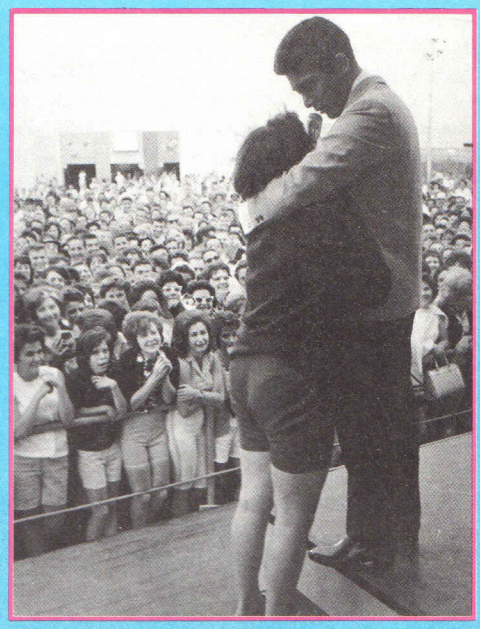
Top right: The rechristened Rick Nelson in the guise of a country rocker. Top: On stage in 1972, promoting the Garden Party *album. Above: The Stone Canyon Band circa 1973 featured, from left, Jay White, Nelson, Denis Larden, Tom Brumley and Ty Grimes. The first album to be recorded by this line-up, entitled* Windfall, *was released in the following year.*

RICKY NELSON
Discography

Singles
A Teenager's Romance/I'm Walking (Verve 10047, 1957); You're My One And Only Love/Honey Rock (with Barney Kessel) (Verve 10070, 1957); Have I Told You Lately That I Love You/Be Bop Baby (Imperial 5463, 1957); Stood Up/Waitin' In School (Imperial 5483, 1957); Believe What You Say/My Bucket's Got A Hole In It (Imperial 5503, 1958); Poor Little Fool/Don't Leave Me This Way (Imperial 5528, 1958); Lonesome Town/I Got A Feeling (Imperial 5545, 1958); Never Be Anyone Else But You/It's Late (Imperial 5565, 1959); Sweeter Than You/ Just A Little Too Much (Imperial 5595, 1959); I Wanna Be Loved/Mighty Good (Imperial 5614, 1959); Young Emotions/Right By My Side (Imperial 5663, 1960); I'm Not Afraid/Yes Sir, That's My Baby (Imperial 5685, 1960); You Are The Only One/Milk Cow Blues (Imperial 5707, 1961); Travelin' Man/Hello Mary Lou (Imperial 5741, 1961); A Wonder Like You/Everlovin' (Imperial 5770, 1961); Young World/Summertime (Imperial 5805, 1962); Teenage Idol/I've Got My Eyes On You (Imperial 5864, 1962); It's Up To You/I Need You (Imperial 5901, 1962); That's All/I'm In Love Again (Imperial 5910, 1963); Old Enough To Love/If You Can't Rock Me (Imperial 5963, 1963); A Long Vacation/Mad Mad World (Imperial 5958, 1963); Time After Time/There's Not A Minute (Imperial 5985, 1963); Today's Teardrops/Thank You Darlin' (Imperial 66004, 1963); Congratulations/One Minute To One (Imperial 66017, 1964); Everybody But Me/Lucky Star (Imperial 66039, 1964); You Don't Love Me Anymore/I Got A Woman (Decca 31475, 1963); String Along/Gipsy Woman (Decca 31495, 1963); Fools Rush In/Down Home (Decca 31533, 1963); For You/That's All She Wrote (Decca 31574, 1963); There's Nothing I Can Say/Lonely Corner (Decca 31656, 1964); A Happy Guy/Don't Breathe A Word (Decca 31703, 1964); Mean Old World/When The Chips Are Down (Decca 31756, 1965); Come Out Dancin'/Yesterday's Love (Decca 31800, 1965); Love And Kisses/Say You Love Me (Decca 31845, 1965); Your Kind Of Lovin'/Fire Breathin' Dragon (Decca 31900, 1966); Louisiana Man/You Just Can't Quit (Decca 31956, 1966); Things You Gave Me/Alone (Decca 32026, 1966); They Don't Give Medals (To Yesterday's Heroes)/Take a Broken Heart (Decca 32055, 1966); Take A City Bride/I'm Called Lonely (Decca 32120, 1967); Suzanne On A Sunday Morning/Moonshine (Decca 3217, 1967); Dream Weaver/Baby Close It's Eyes (Decca 32222, 1967); Promenade In Green/Don't Blame It On Your Wife (Decca 32284, 1968); Barefoot Boy/Don't Make Promises (Decca 32298, 1968); She Belongs To Me/Promises (Decca 32550, 1969); Easy To Be Free/Come On In (Decca 32635, 1970); I Shall Be Released/If You Gotta Go, Go Now (Decca 32676, 1970); We Got Such A Long Way To Go/Look At Mary (Decca 32711, 1970); How Long/Down Along The Bayou Country (Decca 32739, 1970); Life/California (Decca 32779, 1971); Sing Me A Song/Thank You Lord (Decca 32860, 1971); Love Minus Zero (No Limit)/Gipsy Pilot (Decca 32980, 1972); Palace Guard/A Flower Opens Gently (MCA 40001, 1973); Evil Woman Child/Lifestream (MCA 40130, 1973); Windfall/Legacy (MCA 40187, 1974); One Night Stand/Lifestream (MCA 40214, 1974); Try (Try To Fall In Love)/Louisiana Belle (MCA 40392, 1975); Rock And Roll Lady/Fade Away (MCA 40458, 1975); You Can't Dance/I Wanna Move With You (Epic 50459, 1977); Gimme A Little Sign/Something You Can't Buy (Epic 50501, 1978); Dream Lover/That Ain't The Way Love's Supposed To Be (Epic 50674).

Albums (selective)
Ricky (Imperial 9048); *Songs By Ricky* (Imperial 9082); *Spotlight On Rick* (Decca 74608); *Ricky Nelson Sings For You* (Decca 74479); *Garden Party* (Decca 75391).

My Way



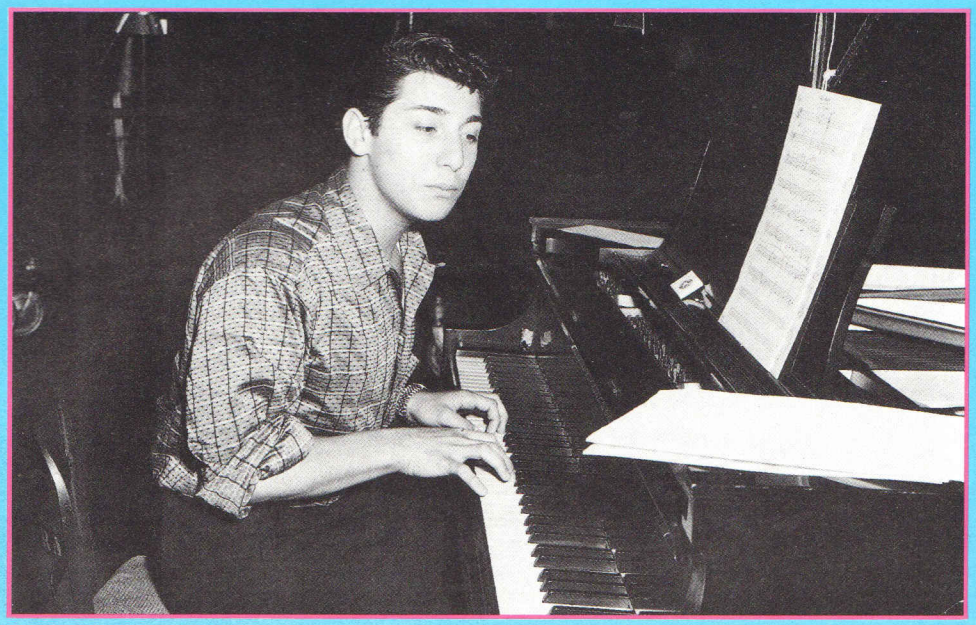
How Paul Anka became the music's youngest millionaire

JUST ONE YEAR after Elvis Presley's seminal 'Heartbreak Hotel', there were signs that rock'n'roll was losing much of its initial dynamism. Paul Anka's 'Diana' and Tab Hunter's 'Young Love' were typical of the big hits of 1957 – soft, bland pop ballads that bore little relation to the brash, earthy rock tracks of Chuck Berry or Jerry Lee Lewis.

In image, too, neither Anka nor Hunter was quite in the Presley mould. Fresh-faced and well-groomed, they belonged to an older show business tradition of crooners and song-and-dance men. Their only real connection with rock'n'roll was their popularity among the vast teenage (and predominantly female) public to whom Presley also appealed. Anka's success, in particular, provided a good illustration of the way in which American record companies could exploit the teen market without promoting the rock'n'roll sound.

Paul Anka was the first of many good-looking, sweet-voiced young singers to emerge during the late Fifties and in many ways he was the most talented. What he had that so many of his rivals lacked was a precocious songwriting ability and an astute business sense, both of which he put to good use when his popularity as a singer faded in the Sixties. Despite his extreme youth – he was barely 15 when he wrote 'Diana' – he always saw himself as a member of the old entertainment school, an infant Sinatra rather than an embryo Presley. It was this awareness of the wider showbiz world outside of rock that helped him make the transition from teen idol to Las Vegas entertainer. As with Anthony Newley, his nearest British equivalent, Anka's interest in rock was to use it as a springboard into show business.

Most of the new teen idols of the late Fifties were of European extraction, many



Three views of stardom: adoring fans weep openly (above left) as Anka embraces an admirer; the songwriter develops a tune (above); and the teen idol accepts an ice-cream from a fan.

from the Italian and Jewish quarters of America's Northern industrial cities. Born in Ottawa, Canada on 30 July 1941, Anka was of Syrian stock, the first son of Camelia and Andrew Anka, first-generation immigrants who owned the La Conda Restaurant, opposite the Canadian Parliament, where MPs and officials dined. Poverty and hardship played no part in his upbringing, yet he was an intensely ambitious child whose drive and determination to succeed alarmed school friends and teachers alike.

By the age of 11 Paul was already the finest singer in the local church choir and the unofficial leader of the school band; he was also a regular frequenter of night-clubs and theatres, learning the art of performing at first-hand and meeting many of his musical heroes by scheming his way into their dressing rooms. At 12 he won a holiday talent contest in Gloucester, Massachusetts, by impersonating Johnnie Ray. In Fisher Park High School, Anka formed his own vocal group called the Bobby Soxers and effectively became their manager, setting up a number of important gigs in and around Ottawa and even performing at Canada's national fair.

The likely lad

Impatient for recognition, Paul next set his sights on Hollywood, which had become America's growth centre for the record industry. While holidaying there, he seized the opportunity to knock on the door of every label in town in search of the big break he knew he deserved. Only one company showed any interest, an R&B independent called Modern, and only one record resulted – 'I Confess', which sold less than 3000 copies locally and was hardly heard beyond California. When the cost of the recording session was deducted from Paul's royalties, he found he had barely enough money to return home.

Modern looked on Paul Anka as a child rock'n'roll star, but he had other ideas. His local heroes had always been the Rover Boys, a vocal outfit who had had some national success, and a visit to their New York hotel in the spring of 1957 brought him a chance encounter with one of the most important up-and-coming producers in the fledgling rock business – Don Costa of ABC Records in Hollywood.

A subsidiary of Paramount Pictures, ABC was initially set up to broaden the film company's financial interests in response to declining cinema audiences, and Costa's brief was to discover and groom new faces for teenage stardom. At a time when every label head dreamed of finding their very own Elvis Presley, Costa was looking for somebody who was slightly different. Paul Anka's youth, good looks and obvious talent made him an appropriate candidate. A contract was drawn up, and within a matter of weeks 'Diana' was receiving national airplay. The girl of the title was Diana Ayoub, the Anka family's favourite baby-sitter.

One of the first to hear the song was Irvin Feld, promoter of a touring rock show called 'The Greatest Show of Stars'. The show had visited Ottawa in March 1957, with Fats Domino headlining, and Anka had performed his usual trick of sneaking past the bouncers to confront both Fats and Feld when the performance finished. Though Feld refused to have anything to do with him, he did take Paul's name and address to get rid of him. When 'Diana' hit the record shops a few months later, he remembered the incident and rang Paul's father immediately. When the next 'Greatest Show of Stars' went on the road, Anka was signed as a top attraction.

Feld was reluctant to become anyone's manager, as he believed he had enough to handle already with his never-ending tours, his chain of record stores and his prize possession, a travelling circus. It was mainly Paul's driving personality – plus, of course, the fact that he already had one massive hit record behind him – that persuaded Feld to accept the invitation to manage the singer.

'Diana' sells a million

By the end of 1957, Paul Anka was one of the hottest properties on the American music scene and Feld needed to do little to ensure that Paul sustained the interest of the fan magazines. 'Diana', released in August 1957, had provided all the promotion that Anka required. The record was greeted as a sensation, not just because its creator was so young but because it featured a fresh new sound that stood out from the efforts of balladeers like Pat Boone and the fast-fading Johnnie Ray.

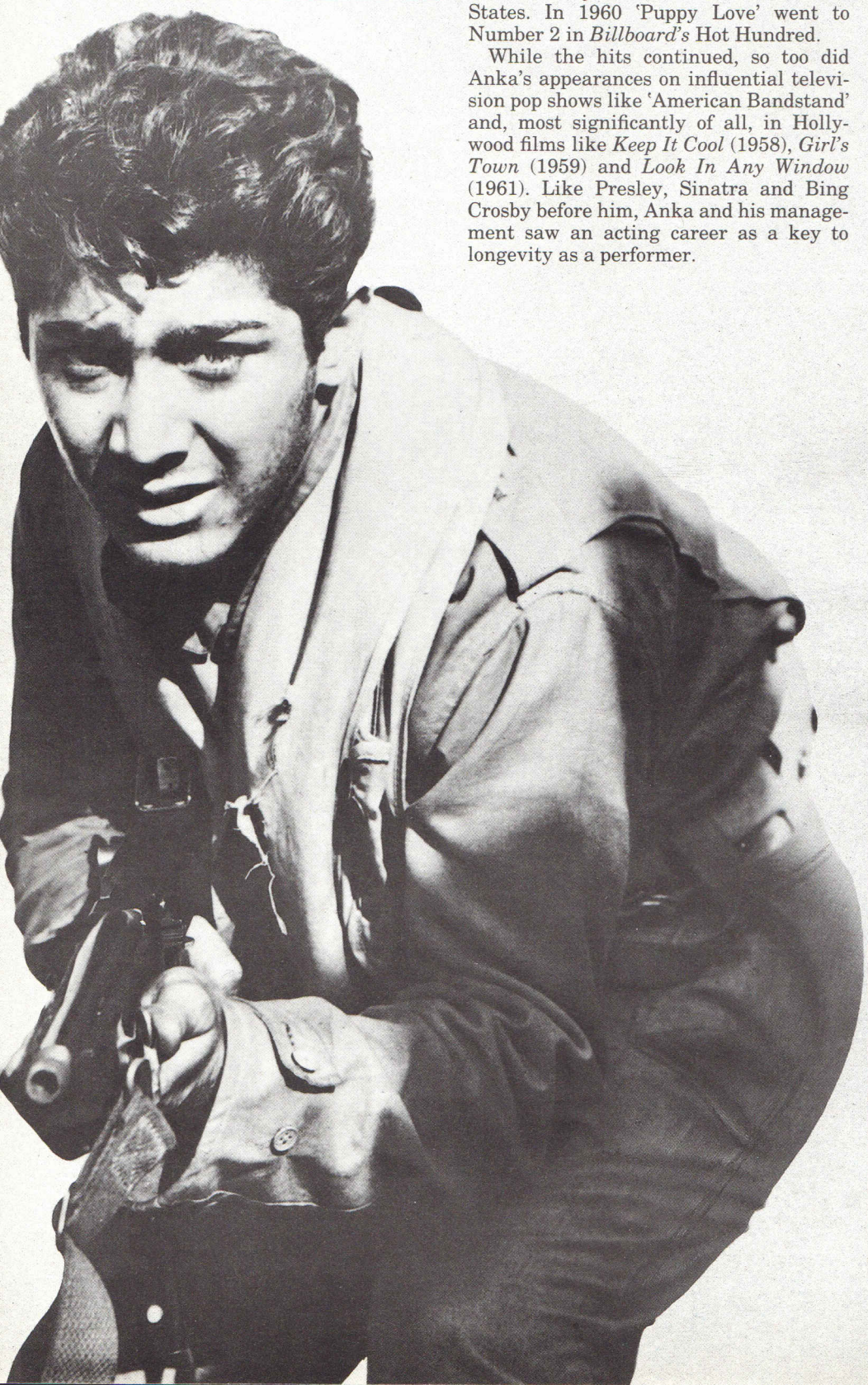
'Diana' wasn't rock'n'roll by any stretch of the imagination, although it featured elements of the rock sound in its saxophone introduction and highly mannered vocal. It was, however, a *teen* ballad and one of the first of its kind, an adolescent answer to the sloppy tear-jerkers in which Johnnie Ray used to specialise. Written and sung by a 15-year-old for kids of his own age, 'Diana' had a naive charm that was disarmingly appealing.

Calculated to appeal to any kid who'd ever wept into his pillow over a love that never blossomed, 'Diana' gave birth to a whole genre of pop songs that detailed the ups and downs of teenage love affairs, songs that were the musical equivalents of the comic-strip love stories so much a part of the teen magazines. Typical of the songs that followed were 'Teen-Age Crush' by Tommy Sands, 'A Teenager In Love' by Dion and the Belmonts, Ricky Nelson's 'A Teenager's Romance' and Neil Sedaka's 'Oh Carol'.

'Diana' reached Number 2 in the American charts but went to the very top in Britain and several other countries; by

'On the record "Diana" we used just five pieces – piano, bass, guitar, sax and drums – plus three voices. We recorded in the Capitol Studio on West Forty-Sixth Street [New York], just across the street from *Variety*. "Diana" was finished in Ottawa. But it wasn't finished when I got in the studio. That's why I used those "uh-oh's" that every rock group was soon doing. I just didn't have any words for those notes. And the "uh-oh" became the gimmick of the record.'

Paul Anka, 1974



1961 the record had sold more than nine million copies throughout the world. Paul was inevitably heralded as a 'boy genius', for composing one's own material was still very much a novelty in 1957. His next few releases also met with success. In Britain 'I Love You Baby' and 'Tell Me That You Love Me' was a double-sided hit. In January 1958 another of his own compositions, 'You Are My Destiny', became a million-seller. The year 1959 proved very successful, too; the tear-jerkers 'Put Your Head On My Shoulder' reached Number 2 in the USA and Number 7 in Britain, and 'It's Time To Cry' rose to Number 4 in the States. In 1960 'Puppy Love' went to Number 2 in *Billboard's* Hot Hundred.

While the hits continued, so too did Anka's appearances on influential television pop shows like 'American Bandstand' and, most significantly of all, in Hollywood films like *Keep It Cool* (1958), *Girl's Town* (1959) and *Look In Any Window* (1961). Like Presley, Sinatra and Bing Crosby before him, Anka and his management saw an acting career as a key to longevity as a performer.

Smart suits and classy songs

Paul Anka's most devoted following was almost exclusively female. While Elvis sent girls into hysterics with just one shake of a leg, Anka made little effort to tease. His songs contained few references to overt sexuality and he represented no threat to established canons of moral probity. Girls dreamed of dating him and cuddling him, but he had none of the physical presence or exciting aggressiveness of a Presley or a Gene Vincent. His songs were geared to his pretty boy image. In 'Lonely Boy' (1959) he is 'Lonely and blue/Sad and blue/All alone with nothing to do', inviting pity and comfort. Frank Sinatra had used a similar device in the late Forties and early Fifties with songs that skilfully played on his public image as a loner and a romantic.

Anka's enormous success represented something of a return to pre-rock'n'roll values in white popular music. No longer, for a few years at least, would a performer wear gaudy clothes and gyrate madly on stage. After Paul Anka the emphasis reverted to smart suits and impeccable manners, classy songs and big orchestral accompaniments. The singers who followed his example were similar boy-next-door figures who made a few films, sold a few records and tended to fade back into obscurity very quickly. Few, with the notable exceptions of Bobby Vee and Neil Sedaka, made much impact outside America (where programmes like 'American Bandstand' were never shown).

Against this kind of competition in the late Fifties Anka fared surprisingly well. Under Irvin Feld's shrewd guidance his career took off in a new direction when he made his acting debut in *Girl's Town*, a

Anka successfully broadened his career. He appeared in The Longest Day *(left) and built a sophisticated cabaret act (below).*

re-make of the Spencer Tracy classic, *Boy's Town*. (In the earlier *Keep It Cool*, Anka had only sung.) In *Girl's Town* he had the starring role: never, Feld insisted, would Paul play second fiddle to anyone. He appeared in the 1962 blockbuster, *The Longest Day*, and wrote the title song.

Don Costa, too, encouraged Anka to broaden his appeal by recording material of a more diverse nature, and his reputation as a songwriter had grown immeasurably when Buddy Holly recorded Anka's song 'It Doesn't Matter Anymore' in 1958, shortly before his death. Anka's one-time girlfriend, Annette Funicello, star of 'American Bandstand', even recorded a whole album of Paul Anka songs. All this helped to establish him with the public as something more than just another pop singer.

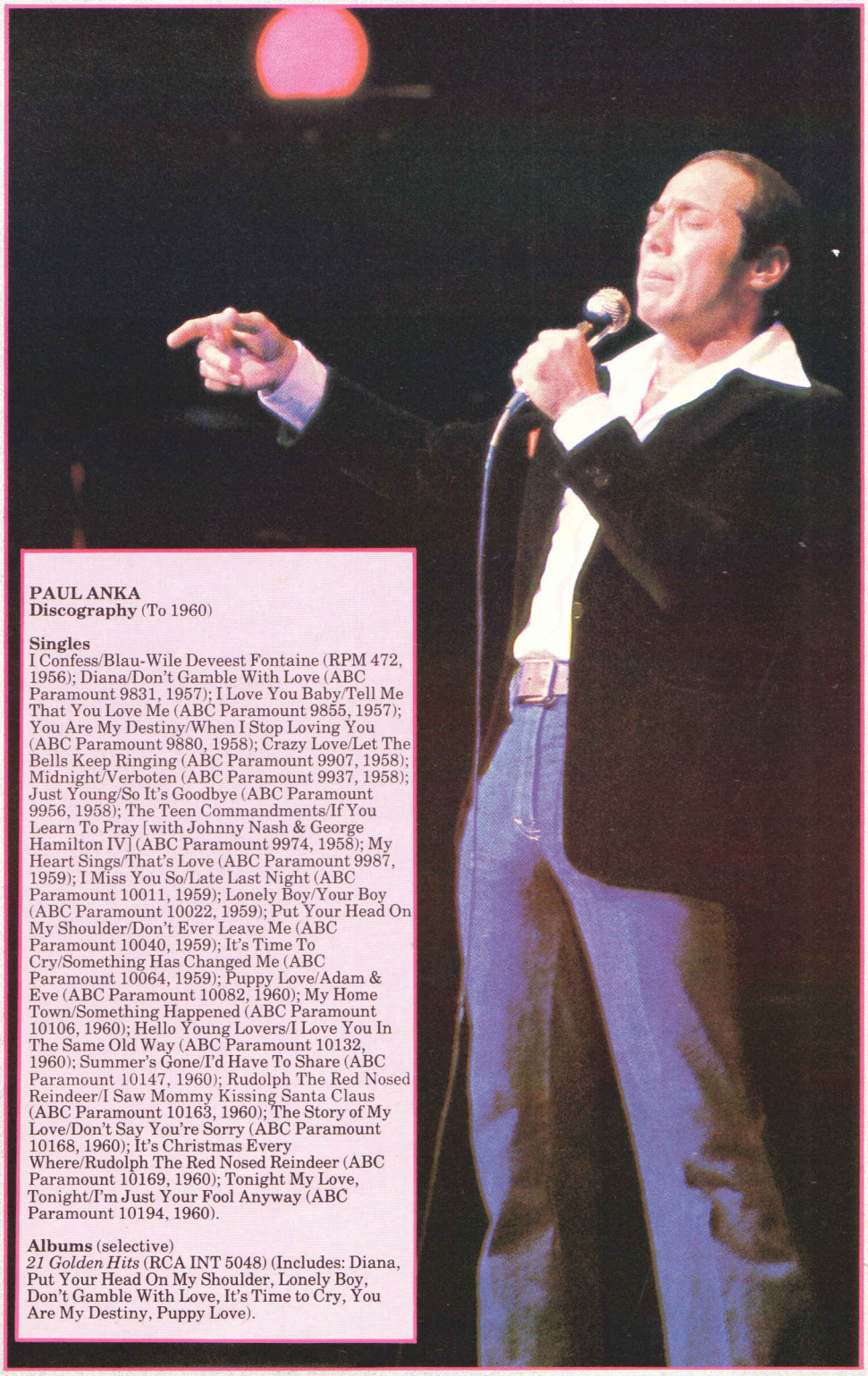
Stepping aside

Anka's chart success could not last forever, and by 1962 his star was on the wane. By this time, the pop climate had changed once again and a newer, younger set of teen stars was in the ascendant, among them Tommy Roe, Gene Pitney and Tony Orlando. Ever the wily businessman, Anka seized the opportunity to change record companies when RCA offered to buy up his contract from ABC. The deal cost RCA more than one million dollars and Anka was allowed to buy all his old ABC masters.

The next few years were rather barren for Anka, as the Beatles and others overturned many of the previously accepted notions about rock music as both a business and a creative form. His move into cabaret, television specials and sophisticated albums was at first only moderately successful, but the astonishing international sales achieved by 'My Way' in 1968 and after gave his career a much-needed boost. The lyric was his translation of a song by French singer-writer Claude François, adapted specifically with Frank Sinatra in mind. It suited Sinatra perfectly and soon became something of a showbusiness anthem.

In the Seventies, Anka continued writing and recording and even reached the Top Ten once more in 1974 on United Artists with 'You're Having My Baby'. He entered rock management for a while, handling two excellent young singer-songwriters in Steve Goodman and John Prine, and was gratified to find many of his old songs being recorded again by the likes of Donny Osmond and David Cassidy. Their choice of his material was highly appropriate, as Donny and David were little more than second generation Paul Ankas, their images just as carefully geared towards pubescent girls, their appeal just as awesomely wholesome. And that, in essence, is his legacy: whenever the climate is right for super-sweet teen stars with head-to-toe teenybopper appeal, Paul Anka's career provides them with a perfect model. STEPHEN BARNARD

Below: Anka performs 'My Way', his most famous song, recorded by singers from Frank Sinatra to Sid Vicious.



PAUL ANKA
Discography (To 1960)

Singles
I Confess/Blau-Wile Deveest Fontaine (RPM 472, 1956); Diana/Don't Gamble With Love (ABC Paramount 9831, 1957); I Love You Baby/Tell Me That You Love Me (ABC Paramount 9855, 1957); You Are My Destiny/When I Stop Loving You (ABC Paramount 9880, 1958); Crazy Love/Let The Bells Keep Ringing (ABC Paramount 9907, 1958); Midnight/Verboten (ABC Paramount 9937, 1958); Just Young/So It's Goodbye (ABC Paramount 9956, 1958); The Teen Commandments/If You Learn To Pray [with Johnny Nash & George Hamilton IV] (ABC Paramount 9974, 1958); My Heart Sings/That's Love (ABC Paramount 9987, 1959); I Miss You So/Late Last Night (ABC Paramount 10011, 1959); Lonely Boy/Your Boy (ABC Paramount 10022, 1959); Put Your Head On My Shoulder/Don't Ever Leave Me (ABC Paramount 10040, 1959); It's Time To Cry/Something Has Changed Me (ABC Paramount 10064, 1959); Puppy Love/Adam & Eve (ABC Paramount 10082, 1960); My Home Town/Something Happened (ABC Paramount 10106, 1960); Hello Young Lovers/I Love You In The Same Old Way (ABC Paramount 10132, 1960); Summer's Gone/I'd Have To Share (ABC Paramount 10147, 1960); Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer/I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus (ABC Paramount 10163, 1960); The Story of My Love/Don't Say You're Sorry (ABC Paramount 10168, 1960); It's Christmas Every Where/Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer (ABC Paramount 10169, 1960); Tonight My Love, Tonight/I'm Just Your Fool Anyway (ABC Paramount 10194, 1960).

Albums (selective)
21 Golden Hits (RCA INT 5048) (Includes: Diana, Put Your Head On My Shoulder, Lonely Boy, Don't Gamble With Love, It's Time to Cry, You Are My Destiny, Puppy Love).

Venus in Blue Jeans?

The role of women in Fifties music

APART FROM the amiable and avuncular Bill Haley, the most memorable figures of the first years of rock'n'roll presented an aggressively sexual, flamboyant, even threatening image. Not surprisingly, perhaps, they were also male. Girls could be seen queueing outside auditoriums, screaming hysterically in the stalls and sobbing later at the stage door; they were often sung about, but rarely got to sing outside the bedroom, where their male idols stared sneering from the walls.

Not that the Top Twenty was annexed entirely by men. In 1955, which began with Elvis Presley's third Sun single flopping, and 1956, which ended with him already content to play the superstar, Rosemary Clooney, Ruby Murray, Alma Cogan, Doris Day and Anne Shelton all topped the British charts, while Joan Weber, the Fontane Sisters, the McGuire Sisters, Kay Starr and Gogi Grant did the same in America.

For the most part the American singers sweetened up black R&B hits for the mass white market, as did another successful female singer of the mid Fifties, Georgia Gibbs. And characteristically they often treated these R&B originals in an old-fashioned way. Kay Starr covered the Cardinals' 'Wheel of Fortune' in 1952 but her 'Rock And Roll Waltz' (1956) took note of the new music, while dismissing it as one more dance craze, no less a novelty step than Rosemary Clooney's mambo ('Mambo Italiano') or Alma Cogan's tango ('Can't Tell A Waltz From A Tango').

By the late Fifties, mature singers such as Anne Shelton (top) and Kay Starr (above) had been eclipsed by cute youngsters like Annette Funicello (left).

Together they had as much to do with rock'n'roll – that raw soundtrack to teenage rebellion – as Tony Bennett and Dean Martin; and remember how Vic Morrow and his pals smashed their 78s in *Blackboard Jungle*. (Ironically, in Evan Hunter's novel *The Blackboard Jungle*, the kids started smashing the records when the teacher played them 'Cow Cow Boogie' by Ella Mae Morse, the only white woman to make good rock'n'roll records in the early Fifties.) The established singers were for parents or older brothers and sisters, seemingly generations away.

By late 1956, rock'n'roll was too big to ignore. The *Daily Sketch's* popular music columnist had given in and wrote, 'Love it, hate it, you're going to get it – the BIG BEAT!' He mentioned Presley's unprecedented sales, Haley's hits, Gene Vincent, Fats Domino, Frankie Lymon, then added: 'The big beat is going to knock out much of the vocal rubbish that's been getting on record. But not great and lovable artists like Anne Shelton ... 'Lay Down Your Arms' is Britain's best-selling disc and it's getting tremendous play in America. Success couldn't come to a nicer lass.'

The piece was illustrated with a picture of Shelton instead of Presley. If it hadn't been for the caption underneath, she might have passed for Gladys, Elvis' beloved mother. Anne Shelton managed but one more hit. The rest of the mid Fifties females' chart careers were finished before the end of the decade, though Doris Day returned to the British Top Ten in 1964 with 'Move Over Darling', the title song of a movie in which she went to bed with Rock Hudson. All these girls were showbiz and looked it. Their hair-dos, gowns and jewellery didn't fit rock'n'roll.

Girls and the beat

In the middle Fifties, a white girl rock 'n'roll singer was difficult to imagine. The older generation's reaction to Presley had been, at best, a raised eyebrow, and at worst a violent revulsion that would have been more easily understood in terms of extreme American attitudes had he been black. Perhaps it was sufficient that Presley's music and his dress smacked of black culture. A white girl in that social climate, adopting similar styles and performing with the same abandon, would have prompted an even greater display of public outrage.

Black singers such as Ruth Brown and LaVern Baker could sing music akin to rock'n'roll; that was accepted. But not until rock'n'roll lost its spark of spontaneity and became a tributary of the musical mainstream, with its waters paddled by clean-cut kids, was it acceptable for white girls to dip a toe in too.

The wildest girl singers came mostly from rhythm and blues roots, like LaVern Baker, or from country music, like Brenda Lee or Wanda Jackson. Very few of them gained much success nationally because rock'n'roll was characterised as a loud, violent music and girl singers were characterised as sweethearts, cowgirls, torch balladeers or movie queens. Brenda Lee was the most successful purveyor of female rock but she was an exception and she had a gimmick, a grown-up voice in the littlest of little girl frames.

Record companies had conducted a brief search for a 'female Elvis' between 1956 and 1958, but none had quite fitted the bill. Janis Martin – 'Drugstore Rock 'n'Roll' and 'My Boy Elvis' – gave up to become a wife, and Jean Chapel – 'Welcome To The Club' – went back to country songwriting, while the other front-runners in the field came to prefer a country, soul or pop image to starving. Wanda Jackson, the rockers' favourite, cut a string of exciting sides but was still essentially a country singer.

LaVern Baker (top) had her biggest pop hit with 'I Cried A Tear' in 1958. The McGuire Sisters (above left) scored with 'Sincerely' in 1955, and Alma Cogan (above) reached Number 1 in the UK that same year with 'Dreamboat'.

All American Connie

It is not totally fortuitous that the career of the first real female star of this new generation coincided precisely with the years that separated the watering down of rock'n'roll and the rise of the Beatles. She was the counterpart of the boys who got their break in the late Fifties on Dick Clark's 'American Bandstand' television show: Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell and Fabian. Just as Avalon was Americanised from Avallone, Rydell from Ridarelli and Fabian from Fabiano Forte, so Concetta Franconero became Connie Francis. She was older than the other three, not quite so good-looking maybe, but she could definitely sing.

Her looks were pert rather than pretty, her movements bouncy rather than sensual, her voice confident but unevocative. No mother could object to her teenage son collecting Connie's records. The song that Connie first scored with, early in 1958, was a ballad from the Twenties, 'Who's Sorry Now?' A minor hit in Britain for Johnnie Ray two years before, it made the US Top Five and was a UK Number 1.

Although she relied repeatedly on oldies, her finest songs were two teen-orientated uptempo novelties, 'Stupid Cupid' (an early Neil Sedaka-Howard Greenfield collaboration and a British Number 1 in 1958) and 'Lipstick On Your Collar' (1959). In the latter song the

theme of infidelity and break-up was treated as solemnly as a seaside postcard. Her uncontroversial character and penchant for overblown ballads might have cut short Connie's career as a pop star, but they facilitated a subsequent side-step from 'big sister' rock into middle-of-the-road musical entertainment.

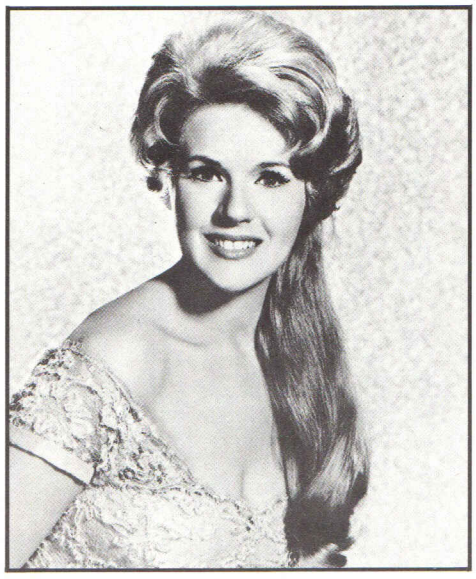
A voice of distinction

Brenda Lee, whose first hit came two years after the rise of Francis, was something else. Though she started and finished in country music, she possessed probably the strongest, most distinctive woman's voice in rock before Janis Joplin. 'Sweet Nothin's' (1960) survives as one of the great singles of rock. On the song her voice was husky and assertive, but dropped occasionally to a tone of precocious confidentiality as expressive to teenage listeners as a knowing wink.

In Britain, if not America, the record arrived before the image of the singer – which came as a surprise, as Brenda Lee turned out to be short, sweet and sub-16. She appeared in gingham frocks and was pictured with a puppy.

Looking back from the mid Seventies Lee admitted that she, like so many young stars at the time, had started out so young that her manager had been able to mould her into what he wanted her to be – an image over which she had no control. Without this gimmicky image, however, it is likely that her audience – and sales – would have been considerably smaller.

Both Brenda Lee and Connie Francis achieved considerable success on both sides of the Atlantic, several of their singles actually selling better in Britain than in America. A search for home-grown British talent produced Helen Shapiro, a



The emphatic style and powerful voice of Brenda Lee (top) combined to give a stunning stage act. Helen Shapiro (top right) scored two million-selling hits in 1961, while Connie Stevens (above) had film-star beauty which helped promote her singing career.

14-year-old Londoner whose hit career lasted little over a year, but included two UK Number 1 hits among five Top Ten entries. Like her American models she had a powerful voice, though this was rich rather than expressive, while her material was pleasant, if predictable; she also lacked a distinctive visual image.

Whereas many male idols of the age struggled to carry any tune more complex than the ring of a cash register, the most popular female vocalists knew the singer's craft. Certainly none resembled Jayne

Mansfield's improbably talentless screecher in the movie *The Girl Can't Help It*, whose only and unmistakeable assets prompted an ogling youth to remark, 'If she's a girl, I don't know what my sister is!'

Actresses and answer records

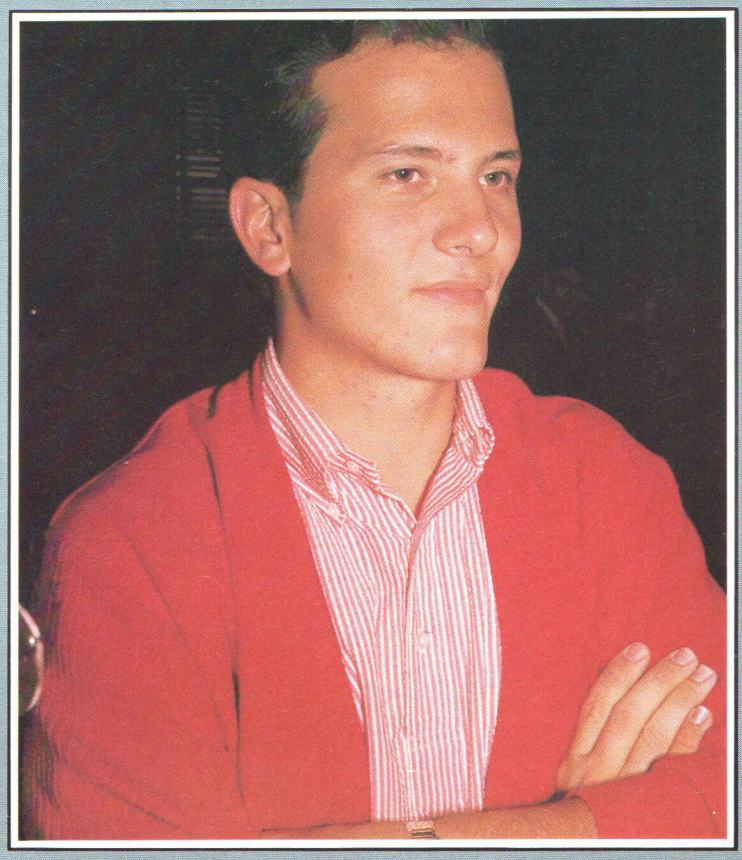
Some stars nevertheless did have more than a voice going for them. Annette Funicello, who managed four American hits with pap like 'Tall Paul' and 'Pineapple Princess', had made her name as one of Walt Disney's Mouseketeers. Debbie Reynolds, Connie Stevens, Hayley Mills and Shelley Fabares were all well-known actresses before their spectacular but short-lived success as pop singers, while Jo Ann Campbell – remembered for wild rockers as well as novelties like 'Kookie Little Paradise' and 'I'm The Girl From Wolverton Mountain' – was a former drum majorette and dancer.

That second record of Jo Ann Campbell's was an 'answer' to Claude King's 1962 US Top Ten hit, 'Wolverton Mountain'. The practice of contriving a reply to a best-selling song was prevalent among female singers and, though obviously no more than a device for cashing in on the popularity of the original, it served to emphasise woman's subordinate role. Even Carole King, who re-emerged in the Seventies singing songs for liberated lovers, started out with 'Oh Neil', a pathetic response to Neil Sedaka's 'Oh Carol'.

Ms King was soon to make amends, however: in 1960 she co-wrote (with husband Gerry Goffin) the Shirelles' million-seller 'Will You Love Me Tomorrow?' The sentiments were not entirely new, but the sound was, and it ushered in an extraordinarily prolific era of girl groups. With the new sound came a new stance and, although two years later Marcie Blane in America and Susan Maughan in Britain were still letting the side down by putting being 'Bobby's Girl' at the top of their priority list, the Cookies insisted, to the contrary, that 'Girls Grow Up Faster Than Boys'. From then on women could claim their rightful place in the music.

JOHN PIDGEON

ROCK TO RELIGION



Pat Boone, singer and preacher. His smooth-style rock songs were hugely successful among white record-buyers.

Pat Boone: cleanest-cut idol of them all

PAT BOONE could never be described as one of rock music's great innovators. Although he recorded rock'n'roll songs and was the only serious rival to Elvis Presley in terms of record sales in the Fifties, he and Presley were polar opposites on both a musical and personal level. Elvis was steeped in the hillbilly and blues traditions that gave birth to rock, and although Boone's roots were hillbilly, he became an old-fashioned crooner in the Bing Crosby vein; and while sexuality and rebellion seemed at the very core of Presley's appeal, Boone openly preached the values of church-going, self-control and respect for one's parents.

In a great many respects he was an oddball, a throwback, a singer whose association with rock always seemed a source of embarrassment to him. If nothing else, however, his staggering success in the Fifties demonstrated that his smooth singing-style appealed to rockers and non-rockers alike.

Particularly for America's white, middle-class, high-school kids from the suburbs of Northern cities, Pat Boone offered a safer, more acceptable alternative to the anarchic, hard-rocking music of the rockabilly rebels and R&B kings of the American South. He could transform the wildest of rock numbers – a song like Little Richard's 'Tutti Frutti', for example – into mere novelty tunes, and he it was who had the bigger-selling versions. It was as if he appealed to a vast 'silent majority' of teenage record-buyers; and because of his widely quoted all-American belief in moral welfare and a Christian upbringing, he was much admired by parents and teachers too, who tended to equate rock'n'roll with juvenile delinquency.

God-fearing country boy

Pat Boone's musical roots were in country and western and white gospel music. He was born Charles Eugene Pat Boone in Jacksonville, Florida, on 1 June 1934. His family later moved to the country music capital of Nashville, Tennessee, and by the age of 13 Pat was singing at local dinner-dances and talent contests.

The church played a huge part in fashioning Boone's attitude to life and forming his musical outlook. Through his church school he gained his first public exposure as a singer, singing hymns and gospel songs on a radio show for Nashville station WSIX. A little later he auditioned for Ted Mack's influential TV talent show, 'Amateur Hour', and won first prize three weeks running. He then won the Arthur Godfrey Talent Scouts contest.

At high school, meanwhile, he met Shirley Foley, the daughter of 'Grand Ole Opry' star Red Foley, and they married after eloping to Texas in 1953. After the wedding, Pat paid his way through teacher training college by working part-time in the control room of WSIX and singing with a hillbilly band at night.

Boone had made C&W records for the small Republic label while still at school, but in 1955 he joined the roster of a record company called Dot, based in Gallatin, Tennessee. Owned and run by ex-US Air Force man Randy Wood, Dot was one of hundreds of new independent labels that sprang up all over the country in response to the rise of rockabilly music and the increasing popularity of black rhythm and blues among white teenagers.

Smooth-sounding covers

Some companies had launched black acts on the white public with only minor success; others, of which Dot was a prime example, found a simpler solution by persuading white artists to cover R&B material with the rough edges of the black sound smoothed out and the lyrics cleaned up. Accordingly, Boone was given some rather surprising songs to record, like Otis Williams' 'Two Hearts, Two Kisses'

(Boone's first hit), The Flamingos' 'I'll Be Home', Fats Domino's 'Ain't That A Shame' and Little Richard's 'Long Tall Sally'.

The Boone versions had none of the vitality or humour of the originals: the arrangements were diluted and extra voices were added, while Boone himself gave the distinct impression he had no idea what he was singing about. Yet the formula worked. 'Ain't That A Shame' was not only an international hit for Boone in 1955 but a million-seller as well, establishing him as a leading American rock'n'roll singer.

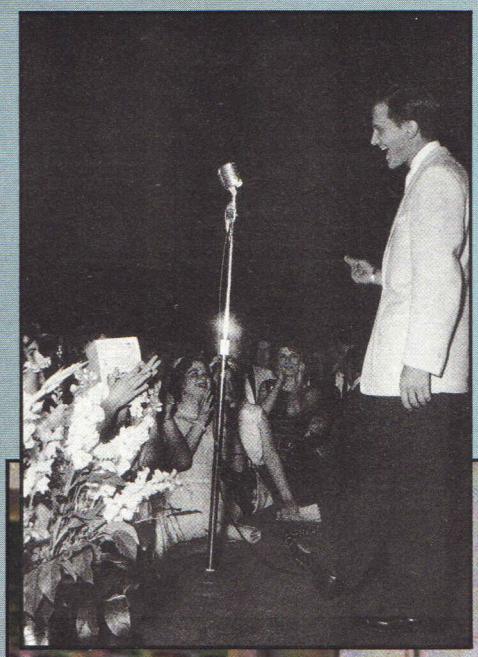
Although the practice of covering black songs for a white audience had its critics, these cover versions nevertheless made acceptable for a mass white audience a type of music which, in its original form, had only limited appeal. Dot's well-oiled distribution system was also important in their success, as it ensured that the records could be bought nationally instead of in just a few states. Not many small companies had the impressive facilities that Dot possessed. Boone himself was also a very easy figure for Dot to promote, given his traditional crooner's voice and boy-next-door good looks. For many record-buyers he was a refreshing change from the risqué flamboyance of Johnnie Ray and the heavy masculinity of Frankie Laine.

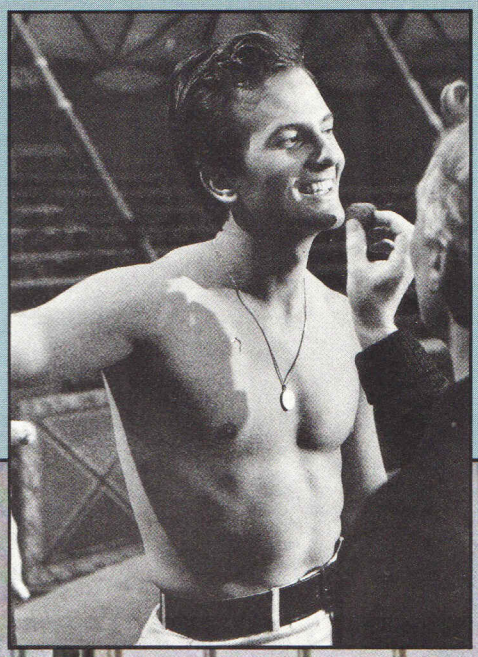
Pat Boone effectively bridged the time gap between Bill Haley, who virtually launched rock'n'roll in 1954 with 'Shake, Rattle and Roll', and Elvis Presley. He had neither the desire nor the ability to compete with Elvis on his own terms. By comparison, Pat Boone's rock'n'roll singing was rather sedate.

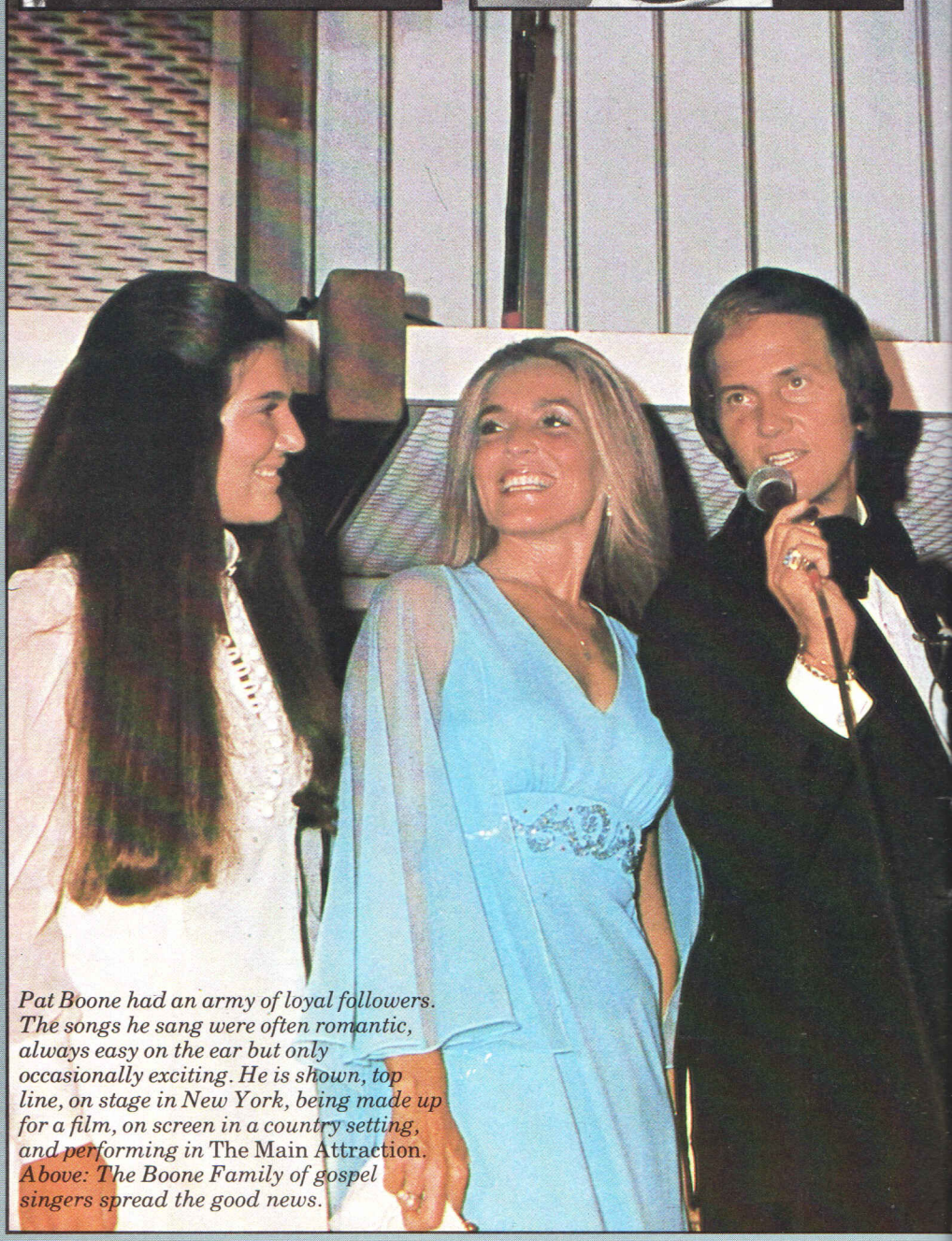
Sweet ballads and fatherly advice

Although Presley's emergence threatened Boone's recording supremacy, it also gave him the chance to drop rock'n'roll material altogether. In 1956, the year of 'Hound Dog' and 'Heartbreak Hotel', the Dot organisation moved to Hollywood and Boone signed a million-dollar film contract with 20th Century-Fox. The switch to films meant he could concentrate on the kind of songs with which he had always felt most comfortable. As a result, his subsequent releases were almost all ballads that he had introduced in movies like *April Love*, *Bernardine* and *Mardi Gras*.

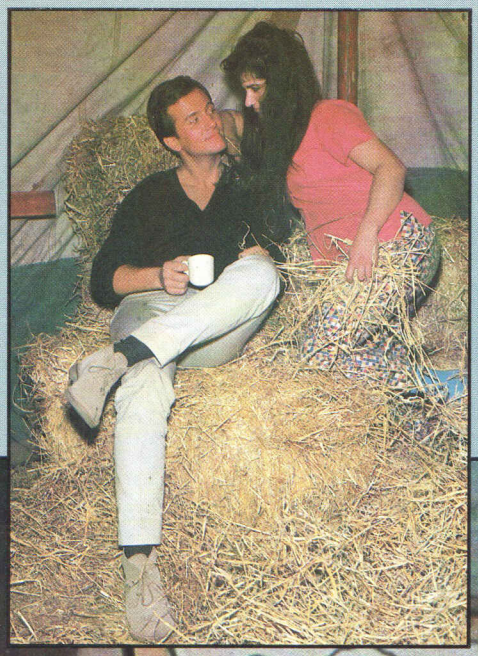
The Pat Boone that the cinema-going public saw was a clean-cut, well-mannered young man and his publicity emphasised that the image was for real. He turned down a syndicated television series because the sponsor was a cigarette company; he baulked at embracing the leading ladies in his films; he even wrote two books of homely advice for parents and teenagers called *The Care and Feeding of Parents* and *Twixt Twelve and Twenty*. In his books he suggested that kids should not go to parties without a chaperone, that pre-marital sex was to be avoided, and that Mum and Dad's word

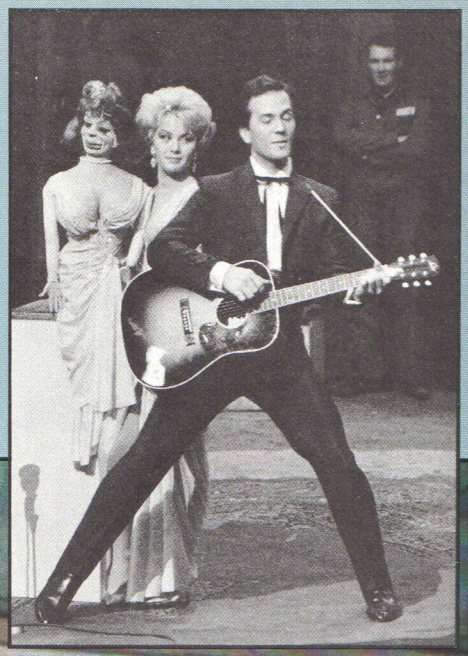






Pat Boone had an army of loyal followers. The songs he sang were often romantic, always easy on the ear but only occasionally exciting. He is shown, top line, on stage in New York, being made up for a film, on screen in a country setting, and performing in The Main Attraction. *Above: The Boone Family of gospel singers spread the good news.*





should always be final. His fundamentalist convictions became even more apparent when he refused the title role in *The St Bernard Story* because St Bernard was a Catholic and he was a Protestant.

The later Fifties and early Sixties brought many more hits, among them 'I Almost Lost My Mind' (his first US Number 1, in 1956), 'Don't Forbid Me' (1956) and 'Love Letters In The Sand' (1957), both reaching Number 1 in the USA and Number 2 in Britain, 'A Wonderful Time Up There' (1958), 'Johnny Will' (1961), and 'Moody River', which went to the top in America earlier that year. Boone also revived such familiar standards as 'White Christmas' and 'I'll See You In My Dreams'. A pseudo-rock'n'roll number, 'Speedy Gonzales' (1962), was a cute musical tribute to a popular cartoon character of the time.

As the decade wore on his professional career and personal life entered a difficult phase. The problem, curiously enough, was his faith. As he later recalled in his autobiography, *A New Song*, he had become unable to resolve the contradictions inherent in his dual role of money-making entertainer and Bible-reading man of God, and it was his faith that had suffered. His marriage came close to breaking point, he made some curious career decisions and the hit records abruptly stopped. Finally, in 1968, he announced his re-conversion to the Christian cause, since when he has concentrated almost exclusively on gospel records and concerts, touring with his wife and children and preaching his particular brand of Christianity to anyone who will listen.

Never one of the entertainment world's more fashionable figures, Pat Boone will always tend to be seen by some as the man whose bowdlerised versions of legendary rock'n'roll songs delayed the growth of *real* rock in America. More than this, his enthusiastic allegiance to the American way of life, the church and the family will forever make him a prime target for those who believe that rock music has always been about rebellion, individuality, personal liberation and challenging authority. Few would argue that his contribution to the development of rock as a sound and as a culture was, in these terms, of major importance. Nevertheless, he sold vast quantities of records featuring rock'n'roll songs and, as such, may well be said to have opened the way for making rock acceptable throughout the United States.

STEPHEN BARNARD

Pat Boone
Recommended Listening

22 Original Hits (Warwick 5089) (Includes: April Love, Bernardine, Johnny Will, I'll Be Home, Muddy River, Long Tall Sally, Chains Of Love, Don't Forbid Me, Why Baby Why, Speedy Gonzales, Ain't That A Shame, The Main Attraction, Friendly Persuasion, It's Too Soon To Know, I Almost Lost My Mind, Remember You're Mine, Twixt Twelve And Twenty, Love Letters In The Sand, Quando Quando Quando, I'll See You In My Dreams, A Wonderful Time Up There, There's A Goldmine In The Sky).

ALL-AMERICAN GIRL

The international stardom of Connie Francis

LISTENING TODAY to many of the records Connie Francis made for MGM in the late Fifties and early Sixties it is difficult to see their relevance to rock music. Her strongest upbeat songs like 'Stupid Cupid' (1958) were soft-centred, and the majority of her recordings were old-fashioned ballads; the remainder fell into the categories of teen-movie theme songs and Latin-rhythm numbers. But in terms of the popular music charts, by which success was measured in the rock'n'roll era, Connie was *the* most significant girl singer in rock music after 1957.

Between 1958 and 1963 Connie Francis seemed hardly ever absent from the American charts. In the 11 years up to 1969 she had 55 hits and became a world star, forging a dual following of teenagers and parents. As a teen idol, she was already 20 and acted like 30. She certainly wasn't a typical sex symbol either, more an elder sister. Connie had a distinctively vibrant voice, at times throaty and otherwise softly vulnerable, mostly manufactured but always insidiously appealing.

The emergence of Connie Francis during the late Fifties, before the British invasion of the American music scene in 1964, confirmed what was happening to rock'n'roll. The music was changing, moving away from its roots in rhythm and blues and rockabilly to smoother forms; and Connie Francis was a symbol of that change.

Connie had been born Concetta Franconero to an Italian family in Newark, New Jersey, on 12 December 1938. She first showed musical ability when she began to play the accordion at school and, at the age of 10, she appeared in a TV talent show, 'Startime'. Eventually she became a featured vocalist on the show, singing a range of children's songs and pre-war ballads. The producer of 'Startime', George Scheck, thought Connie showed promise and he became her personal manager. Following appearances on the nationally-syndicated Arthur Godfrey talent show, the re-named Connie Francis gained a record contract with the New York office of the influential MGM label; she was 17 years old.

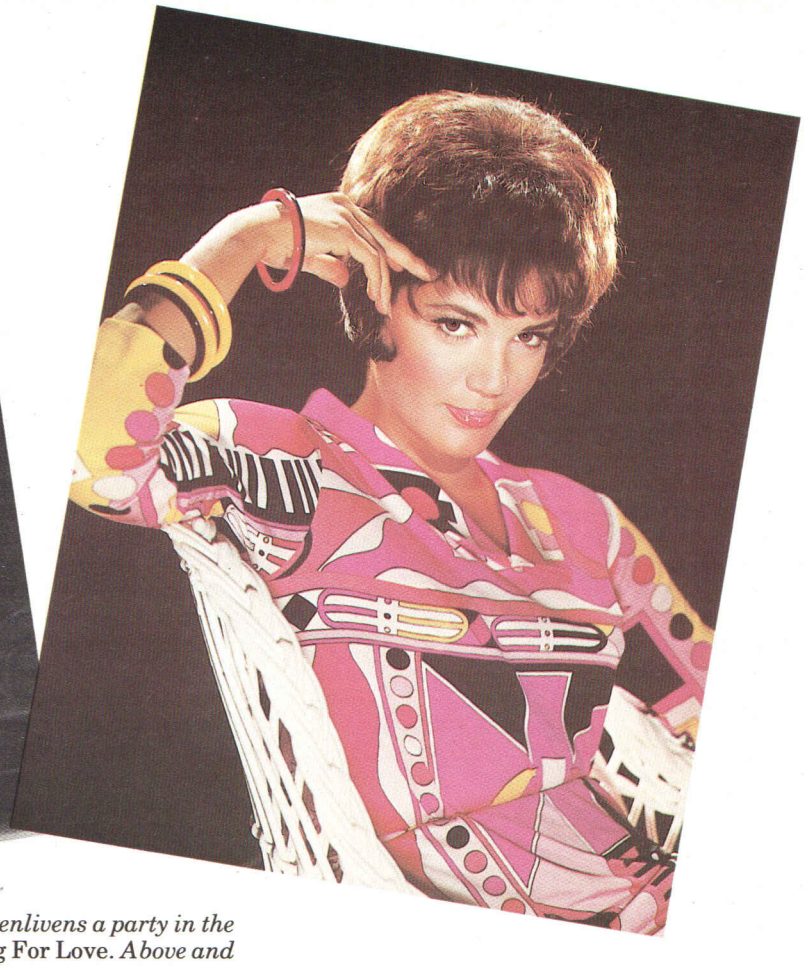
During these early days Connie did not seem teen-star material: she played accordion and was overweight. Scheck took her in hand and reputedly told her 'You can't hide your belly behind your accordion!' He saw it as his task to transform the little girl into a potential star. Nevertheless, very little happened at first although one song, 'Sailor Boy', did become a minor hit. For a time in the mid Fifties Connie concentrated on college rather than music. It was a sensible decision in view of her uncertain prospects.

Sweet with a beat

In 1957, an offer came for her to star in an MGM rock exploitation movie called *Jamboree*. In this Connie played Honey Wynn, a young singer who loved, lost and loved again in the course of a trashy plot that was peppered with cameo musical slots from such greats as Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino and Count Basie and from the much lesser talents of Jodie Sands and Ron Coby. Connie sang solo and in puppy-love duets with Paul Carr. In this way, MGM turned their young professional singer into their token teen idol.

As *Jamboree* hit the movie screens in 1958, MGM put renewed effort into promoting Connie's recording career, and her first chart entry came in February 1958. 'Who's Sorry Now?' went to Number 4 in the United States and Number 1 in the UK, and set her style for the future. It was a gently-rocked standard and, not insignificantly, it had been her father's idea to try that style. During the next few years Connie would rack up nine separate million-sellers with brightly-bouncing oldies and throbbing ballads. 'Stupid Cupid' hit in the summer of 1958 – it went to Number 1 in the UK – followed by 'My Happiness' and, at the end of the year, 'Majesty of Love', a surprising duet hit with MGM's country rocker, Marvin Rainwater.

The following year, 1959, found seven wholly innocuous Connie Francis songs in the charts, including 'Lipstick On Your Collar' and 'Frankie' for young teenagers and 'Among My Souvenirs' and 'God Bless America' for their parents. Connie must have found this last title particularly easy



Opposite: Connie enlivens a party in the 1964 film Looking For Love. *Above and right: Changing fashions for changed times. Connie shows a leg, and strikes a coy pose. Bottom: Fans gather for the signature of a star, the biggest-selling female singer of all time.*

to sing, since hers was the classic example of the American dream, from immigrant origins to all-American superstardom. In 1960 came 'Everybody's Somebody's Fool', an upbeat ditty with country and western inflections that raced up the Hot Hundred to become her first pop Number 1. With this success repeated around the world, life became a whirl of TV shows and international tours. And when she got time off, MGM was ready with a handful of teenage-movie scripts.

On the beach

Connie Francis' movie career reflected the changing pattern of pop musicals. *Jamboree* had been a wrapping in which to set a host of rockers; then came a series of ivy-league beach vacation movies – girls and boys, sea and sand and swimsuits and songs. This was the era of Annette Funicello, the pert body that sang a little and filled the screen in such teen epics as *Bikini Beach* and *Muscle Beach Party*. Annette's songs, like 'Tall Paul', matched her movies and, fittingly, appeared on the Disneyland label.

Connie's movies at least came off the beach occasionally, and she could sing decently. In 1961 she starred in *Where The Boys Are* – the title song being one of her better numbers and written, like 'Stupid Cupid', by Neil Sedaka – and 1962 brought *Follow The Boys*. Both title songs were big hits and followed other ballad oldies like 'My Heart Has A Mind Of It's Own' (1960) and 'Don't Break The Heart That Loves You' (1962).

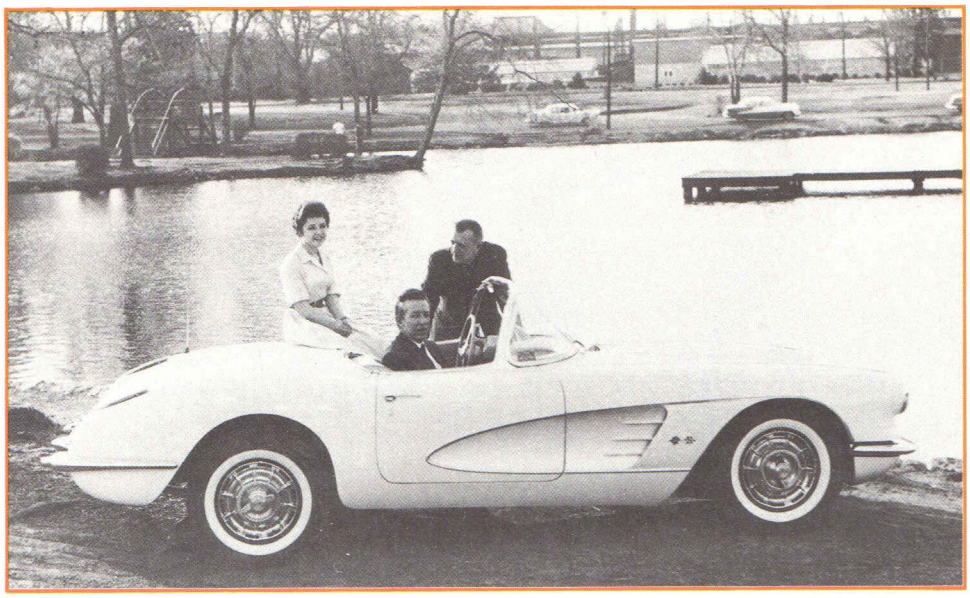
By 1965, times were changing. The movie *When The Boys Meet The Girls* contained a musical mixture with Connie's ballads, Louis Armstrong's hokum, Sam the Sham's latter-day Memphis sound and Herman's Hermits from Britain. Rock music was becoming less Tin Pan Alley, less American. MGM saw the writing on the wall and engineered a switch for Connie from her teen-rock base into the all-round light entertainment world of Latin-American albums, country LPs and any other theme records they could think of. Her singles hits continued throughthe Sixties, though on a smaller scale, and Connie Francis was increasingly to be found in Italy or Spain, recording albums in the languages of the world. Her contribution to the development of rock may have been limited, but the number of hits she chalked up was undeniably impressive.

MARTIN HAWKINS

Connie Francis
Recommended Listening

20 All Time Greats (Polydor 2391-290) (Includes: Who's Sorry Now, My Happiness, Where The Boys Are, Lipstick On Your Collar, My Heart Has A Mind Of It's Own).

LITTLE MISS



Brenda Lee's powerful voice belied her tender years

Born Brenda Mae Tarpley in Atlanta, Georgia, on 11 December 1944, Brenda Lee is rumoured to have taken to the road with a singing group at the age of five to help support her family. Certainly, she admitted to playing shows in Atlanta sports arenas and school-houses well before her tenth birthday, and to having her own radio spot on a station in Augusta, Georgia.

Her discovery through the radio show by country star Red Foley in 1956 led to the Tarpley family moving to Springfield, Missouri. Brenda's subsequent appearances on Foley's 'Ozark Jubilee' TV show were well received, and brought a recording contract with Decca in Nashville. Her first disc, cut in July 1956, was a rocked-up version of Hank Williams' 'Jambalaya'. It became a regional country hit on the strength of Brenda's TV appearances and her 'novelty' status – she was, after all, still only 11 years old. This was not remarkable enough for Decca, who billed her at first as 'Little Brenda Lee – nine years old'. Her publicity, rather more accurately, dubbed her 'Little Miss Dynamite'.

That such a powerful voice should come from such a young girl (opposite and inset right opposite) astonished Brenda Lee's first audiences. By the early Sixties she had acquired a slightly more sophisticated look (above and inset left opposite) but even in 1969 (above right with manager Dub Allbitten and producer Owen Bradley) she was still only 25, with her greatest triumphs years behind her.

Brenda the balladeer

In 1957 Brenda Lee made the charts. 'One Step At A Time' made Number 43 in the Hot Hundred and Number 15 in the country charts, paving the way for a crossover pop-rock career. There followed several early attempts to hit with out-and-out rockers like 'Dynamite' and 'Let's Jump The Broomstick', and for some years Brenda was a member of the rock'n'roll package show circuit, taking her school books with her. 'Dynamite', with a driving beat behind Brenda's rasping, bluesy voice was a minor pop hit. However, her producer at Decca's Nashville studios, Owen Bradley, soon realised that her voice was even more suited to anguished ballads.

Bradley was pioneering a new sound in the late Fifties, with strings and vocal choruses built around heartfelt storylines; this was the 'Nashville sound'. Country singers were the raw material for Bradley's experiments, and child prodigies with adult voices were a godsend. In 1959, 'Sweet Nothin's' made Number 4 on the US Hot Hundred and the following year 'I'm Sorry' – a deeply felt ballad that had been originally issued as a flipside – went to Number 1.

On disc, Brenda Lee sounded like an adult; in live performance, however, that world-worn voice could be seen to come from a little girl who looked harmlessly cute. In 1959 Brenda took her act to Paris, where *Le Figaro* found it hard to believe she was as young as she looked. The paper's reviewer felt she must be a 32-year-old midget, not a 15-year-old. Her career blossomed because of her image as the rocker in the party dress.

1960 was the first year of superstardom. Five Brenda Lee titles hit the pop charts and the tiny young redhead was soon a fixture in the fan magazines, telling all about her favourite colours and the best flavour of ice-cream. Years later, she reflected: 'I'd do a show and it seemed like there'd be 82 acts on the bill of those rock packages, each earning over a thousand bucks a night. That was big money. And it was a fun time. There was a lot of comradeship. Trouble was, I was always the baby, the little sister. It was tough when Fabian and Duane Eddy became my pals and I wanted them to flirt with me but all they did was tell me their troubles.' The year ended with a European tour and 'Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree', a bouncy bopper that was to become a perennial yuletide hit.

Nashville sweetenings

The early Sixties were years of consolidation, in which Brenda Lee established herself at home, in Europe and in South America. During this time, she notched up at least one large-scale hit each year: 'Fool Number One' charted in 1961, then 'All Alone Am I' in 1962 and 'As Usual' in 1963. Whereas 'Sweet Nothin's' had been a simmering rocker, the later hits contained fewer elements of rock'n'roll and more of the Nashville sweetenings. Brenda's vocal style remained tough, though, and even when the Mersey sound forged a new era in rock Brenda Lee retained enough fans to put her into the Hot Hundred in 1967.

DYNAMITE

Eventually, the hits stopped coming and Lee retired to family life for a while. She recalled: 'At that time I was neither fish nor fowl. The company didn't know what to do with me. The business had become less friendly and I didn't fit. I wouldn't change my style even if I could, so I preferred to take a rest. I was having problems with my throat, and besides I didn't have the kind of ego that said I had to be on the charts all the time. I knew I was good. I knew I was a success. I knew I could come back.' There was no thought of going into other fields. Brenda had made a movie in 1962, *The Two Little Bears*, and she had tried stage musicals. She gave all this up, concluding, 'I'm a singer, not an actress'.

Country rockin'

In 1973 Brenda Lee made a renewed assault on the country music world, with a top-selling album *Brenda* following a Top Five country single, 'Nobody Wins', penned by the then up-and-coming Kris Kristofferson. She commented: 'I feel the key to success is good songs, and country writers are good writers. The first song I ever learned was a country song, Hank Williams' 'Mansion On The Hill'. But I look all around. When I was a kid I used to play with the black kids on our street and I'd go to church with them and pick up elements of gospel music. I guess that's why I sing so oddly, why I've never been quite rock or quite country or quite pop.'

Brenda's country push had been presaged during her 'retirement' years by occasional hits like 'Johnny One Time' in 1969 and 'If This Is Our Last Time' in 1971, and was sustained through the Seventies with 'Sunday Sunrise' (1973) and 'The Cowgirl And The Dandy' (1974). These recordings were all made in Nashville, all – apart from one record on Elektra – for the Decca label (now re-named MCA), and all with the same basic approach.

The reasons for Brenda Lee's success are two-fold. She has generally chosen very strong material to record, and she has applied to that material a husky, bluesy voice that belies her tiny 4-foot 11-inch frame and little girl looks. Her style is little different today, when she stars in country shows, from that of the early Sixties when she appeared on stage wearing lamp-shade skirts and singing hits like 'Sweet Nothin's', 'I'm Sorry' and 'As Usual'. With 48 US hit records and countless international successes between 1956 and 1967, Brenda Lee was undoubtedly one of the major female stars of the rock'n'roll era. MARTIN HAWKINS

Brenda Lee was still belting it out in the Seventies as a country star.

Brenda Lee
Recommended Listening

Miss Dynamite (Warwick 5083) (Includes: Sweet Nothin's, Dum Dum, Fool Number 1, That's All You Gotta Do, I Want To Be Wanted, Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree, I'm Sorry).

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Jimi Hendrix

Above: An early picture of the Jimi Hendrix Experience with Mitch Mitchell (drums) and Noel Redding (bass); Hendrix's 'upside-down' Stratocaster is clearly visible here. Overleaf: Psychedelic Jimi.

People began to notice the guitar playing of Jimi Hendrix after the formation of the Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1966, with Jimi's stratocruising Stratocaster dressed up in sufficient interplanetary garb to make audiences wonder if the music came from another planet. Firmly attached to the third stone from the sun as Jimi was, he took the electric guitar about as far away from memories of a Spanish gut-stringed instrument as anyone ever has. Some elements of his sound came from recording studio trickery, such as reverse tapes and signal processing, but in the main it was from his unusual but effective technique and wide, inquisitive use of sound-bending effects.

Adventurous from the start, Hendrix played an upside-down right-handed Stratocaster, which he re-strung to accommodate his left-handedness. Hendrix had progressed to the Strat before the Experience was formed, although he did use other guitars on occasions, either when the sound he had in mind demanded them or, more simply, when there was nothing else to hand: a Gibson Les Paul on 'House Burning Down' from *Electric Ladyland* (the only LP over which Jimi had complete control); A Gibson Flying V which he can be seen with in some later concert footage and to which he referred as my 'Flying Angel'; a Fender Telecaster; a few Rickenbackers, and a battered old Hofner, used to sizzling blues effect on 'Red House', from the first album, *Are You Experienced?*

Jimi mainly used Strats made in 1967 and 1968, their rosewood necks slightly slinkier than the chunkier maple-necked models which re-appeared some years later. Even by the late spring of 1967 Hendrix had been through six Stratocasters: two were stolen, two others 'fogged up on him', leaving two for gigs. Hendrix would alter these guitars to suit his needs: he would fiddle with the guitar's pickup selector, for example, to find the hollowed-out lines heard on 'Little Wing' from *Axis: Bold As Love*. He occasionally disconnected the tremolo arms from some guitars because of associated tuning problems, but his use of this pitch-bending arm can be heard all over the records, especially the earlier releases – a good example is the way Hendrix brings in the solo on 'Little Wing' with a cascading tremolo-armed chord.

Naturally, Jimi wanted all the guitar's controls within easy reach; his upside-down guitar made the volume, tone and selector controls nestle near his left forearm, so it was an obvious step to bend the tremolo arm nearer his fingers. Eventually he would operate all the controls in one fluid, easy-playing motion. Perhaps the most immediately obvious part of Hendrix's style was the way in which he used the sheer electronic potential of the guitar. Jimi used feedback creatively: he harnessed the wild, whistling sound of guitar and amplifier interacting in this way to his advantage, tapping and hitting all parts of the guitar, especially the back of the neck, to encourage the feedback-modifying vibrations within the guitar (as can be heard on 'The Star Spangled Banner' from *Woodstock*). Beside possessing a phenomenal technique, Hendrix was a great showman and he combined both these aspects to stunning effect in his live performances, mixing outrageous behaviour and instrumental virtuosity in equal degree.

Amplification was usually supplied by the British company, Marshall, whose 100-watt amplifiers were used in conjunction with stacks of cabinets each containing four 12-inch speakers. At various times he used other makes, like Sound City, Fender, Orange and Sunn, but his specially strengthened Marshalls formed the basis of his amplification.

One of the hard-working crew, Roger 'the Valve' Mayer, was responsible for a device dubbed the Octavia by Hendrix with which he used to shift the note being played up a whole octave. He used it first on 'Let Me Stand Next To Your Fire' from the first album and then on 'Little Miss Lover' from *Axis: Bold As Love*, but listen too for its distinctive wail on 'One Rainy Wish' from *Electric Ladyland*.

The Octavia joined a battery of other effects boxes: a Fuzz Face, giving dirty distorted sounds, often linked with a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal for even stronger effects such as those on 'Love Or Confusion' from *Are You Experienced?*; a Univox Univibe which recreated a sound similar to one Hendrix already used, namely the swirling, jangling sound of guitar through a rotating Leslie organ speaker (heard on 'Pali Gap' from *Rainbow Bridge*); and the Vox wah-wah pedal, first used on 'The Burning Of The Midnight Lamp' on *Electric Ladyland*, an interesting track, too, for Jimi's use of clavichord to double the wah-wah'd guitar and mellotron to 'play' the women's voices.

The interweaving of sounds that Hendrix achieved in his studio mixes, using stereo panning, odd phasing effects and more, make it difficult at times to pinpoint individual lines; the whole aural effect, even so long after his death, still sounds puzzling, exciting and uniquely Hendrix. One can only assume that he would have taken his music even further: plans had been made just before his death in 1970 for a collaboration with jazz arranger Gil Evans, and Jimi had already begun to explore the possibility of an 'orchestra of guitars' on later tracks like the studio version of 'Star Spangled Banner', recorded over a year before he died. It's doubtful that Jimi Hendrix ever translated his real musical energy onto magnetic tape, but what we have is an exhilarating reminder of his genius. One wonders what he might have done with more advanced electronics and synthesisers.

TONY BACON

THE HISTORY OF Rock